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Beecham, J.,

JOHN P. HENRY, JR.

WITH NOTES BY J. P. HENRY, JR.

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AN
ESSAY ON THE CONSTITUTION
OF
WESLEYAN METHODISM,

IN WHICH
VARIOUS MISREPRESENTATIONS OF SOME OF ITS LEADING
PRINCIPLES ARE EXPOSED,
AND
ITS PRESENT FORM IS VINDICATED.

BY JOHN BEECHAM, D.D.

WITH NOTES, AND AN APPENDIX,
CONTAINING
CONNEXIONAL DOCUMENTS.

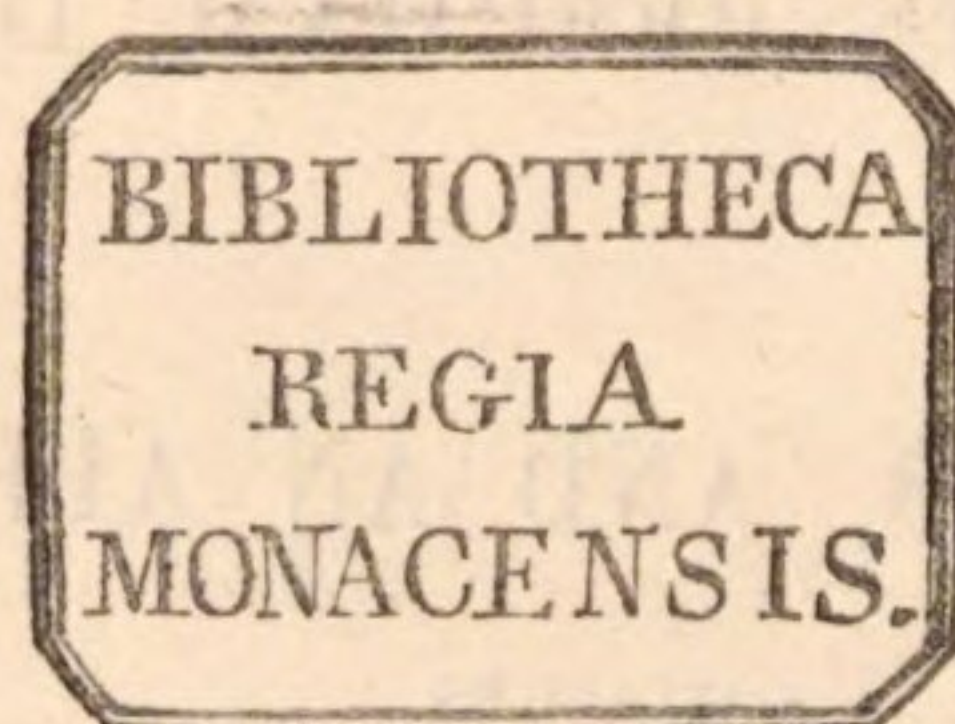
I SPEAK as to wise men; judge ye what I say.—PAUL.

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TO
THE TRUSTEES, STEWARDS, LOCAL PREACHERS, AND
CLASS-LEADERS
OF THE
LIVERPOOL SOUTH CIRCUIT.

DEAR BRETHREN,

I HASTEN to meet the wish, which you have so generally expressed, that I should publish the substance of the Speech I delivered at our Christmas Quarterly-Meeting, on the constitutional questions by which some individuals have attempted to agitate the Connexion.

The following Essay was written previously to that Meeting, without any view to its ever appearing in print; and as it embodies the arguments which, on that occasion, I advanced in your hearing, I have revised the whole, and, with some slight additions to meet more recent objections, I now present it for your use.

If it should answer the purpose of a manual, and give you such a satisfactory view of the subject in question, as may save you the trouble of a more laborious research, or should only serve as a guide to direct you in a more extended inquiry, I shall be sufficiently compensated for the trouble attending its preparation.

I remain,

Your affectionate brother, and devoted servant in Christ,

THE AUTHOR.

MOUNT-PLEASANT, LIVERPOOL, *April 30th*, 1829.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE views of Methodism, and the arguments in favour of its Constitution, contained in this Essay, are exhibited in a controversial form. This resulted from the circumstances which called it forth. A controversy arose, in 1828, respecting the interposition of the District-Committee in the case of the Leeds Organ, which involved the entire question of the Constitution of Methodism. The Wesleyan Connexion is not to be regarded as a mere association of independent churches, for some general object not affecting their several internal arrangements ; but it is such an association of churches or Societies as blends the whole into one body, with an united pastorate, having one and the same system of doctrine, being under the administration of a common discipline, and having common institutions and funds for their support. Such a body, while receiving the laws of Christ as its rule, must necessarily possess a governing power, for the purpose of giving effect to those laws, and of making the prudential arrangements necessary for the due regulation of Connexional affairs : and the controversy of that day mainly hinged upon this point. The principal objections urged by the dissatisfied parties seriously involved the Connexional principle ; for had there been validity in the arguments which they employed against the authority of the Conference and of District-Committees, it would have followed, that the Connexion was not really pervaded by a common principle as one body, nor held together by any real bond of union,—that, in fact, its oneness existed principally in form and appearance,—and, as a consequence, that the body was not calculated to bear the pressure of adverse circumstances, or resist the force of divisive influences in the time of trial. This Essay, therefore, took its peculiar form from the questions which were then mooted. It was written with the view of subjecting the Constitution of Methodism to such an investigation as would establish the fact, that the Conference is the principal authority in the Connexion, charged with the general management and regulation of its affairs.

The first edition of the Essay was speedily sold. I have been frequently requested to publish a second, but have hitherto declined ; because the question of the Constitution of Methodism, having been examined in a controversial manner, with especial reference to one object, a greater degree of prominence was given to the government of the Connexion than seemed desirable in a time of peace and tranquillity. After the subsidence of the agitation in which the Essay was written, it appeared to me that, instead of its re-publication, it would be better that some competent person should examine the Constitution of Methodism on

such general grounds, as would divest the subject of the air of controversy, and give no more prominence to any of the principal features of the Constitution, than their relative importance might demand. But the times are again changed ; and I now yield to a new request—that I would publish a second edition of the Essay—which, to my mind, possesses much of the force of command. It would seem as though there is something in the theory of an eloquent living writer,—that events revolve in cycles. In the revolution of the wheel of Methodism, after something more than twenty years the same controversy is revived ; the same objections are urged against the authority of the Conference ; and the same claims advanced in favour of the independence of the local meetings, against the jurisdiction of the District-Committees. The Essay, in its original form, appears, therefore, on the whole, as much adapted to the present controversy, as it was to the one which it was designed to meet. After the lapse of more than twenty years, the views which I embodied in the Essay have undergone no material change. Reflection and observation have only tended to satisfy me of their substantial accuracy. And I am more than ever persuaded, that the changes in Methodism which are again recommended by certain parties, although spoken of under the name of reform, would, in reality, if practically adopted, effect a revolution ; and, while professing to improve Methodism, would, in fact, subvert it, and substitute another system in its stead. I, for one, am not prepared to make the experiment. I cannot, I dare not, be a consenting party to any such attempt ; but feel myself bound to do whatever I can, Christianly and constitutionally, to prevent its success. And while I endeavour to maintain the trust committed to me, in part, as a Methodist Minister, I do so from the deep conviction, that the present system of Methodism is far more scriptural in its character, and better calculated to promote the cause of pure and undefiled religion, than would be the case were it to undergo that transformation which is now advocated as salutary reform. I should not engage in controversy for its own sake ; but the Christian man and Christian Minister may not shrink from an irksome task, when the interests of the cause of Christ require its performance.

J. B.

11, LLOYD-STREET, LLOYD-SQUARE, LONDON,
June 19th, 1850.

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AN ESSAY,

&c.

AMONG the various views under which Methodism presents itself for our consideration, its polity is not the least important. A system which cements in one a religious community, so numerous and widely-extended as the Wesleyan Methodists,—a government which, without secular power, extends over and effectually provides for the whole,—is a subject of interesting inquiry to the mere observer; but to Methodists themselves it is a question of practical moment. Circumstances will occasionally transpire, by which their attention will be called to the principles on which their polity is founded; and if those principles be but imperfectly understood by them, their peace will be liable to be disturbed by groundless fears and unnecessary apprehensions. A competent knowledge of the leading features of their system, is one of the most likely means, under the blessing of God, to secure the Methodists from those agitations to which a large and popular body is ever exposed.

To place in a clear light the constitution of Methodism, as settled by the Regulations of 1795 and 1797, it will be necessary to ascertain what it was previously to that important period. It is true, had the constitution then been formed entirely afresh, what it was originally would be a question of curiosity rather than practice: but as this was not the case,—as the old system was only altered and modified, while it remained, as to its fundamental principles, the same,—a knowledge of it, in its former state, is indispensably necessary.

In prosecuting the proposed inquiry, while I elicit, from the official documents and history of Methodism, a general view of its constitution, I shall endeavour, at the same time, effectually to expose the misrepresentations by which it has been latterly assailed.

According to the plan thus marked out, the first subject of our inquiry will be,

1. THE CONSTITUTION OF METHODISM PREVIOUS TO 1795 AND 1797.

With original as well as modern Methodism misrepresentation has been at work, and has given us a picture very discordant from the truth. It is assumed by some, that, at the close of Mr. Wesley's life, the local meetings, of which the Preachers of the Circuit are said to have been only members, and the Superintendent the Chairman, had, in all local affairs, become confirmed, by usage, in a state of independence;—that the judicial power of the Conference was limited, by

the "Deed of Declaration," to the trial and expulsion of its own members;—and that, therefore, the Conference had no right of judicial interference with either the officers or members of the Societies, either directly, or by means of such a provision as the District-Committee. To this view of original Methodism, there is a *primâ facie* objection. There are a few principles common to all governments whatever; and one of these is, that every body politic must have a head. This head, in the language of political writers, is "the supreme power;" and is described as the power which legislates,—the power which makes laws for the body. Speaking of this power, Blackstone says,* "All others must conform to, and be directed by it, whatever appearance the outward form and administration of the government may put on. For it is at any time in the option of the Legislature to alter that form and administration by a new Edict or Rule, and to put the execution of the laws into whatever hands it pleases: and all the other powers of the state must obey the legislative power in the execution of their several functions, or else the constitution is at an end." So universal is this principle, that it is recognised in the simplest of all polities,—domestic government, the government of a single family. The parent—the master—is the head. It is for him to lay down rules for the conduct of the family; and he is armed with the rightful power of enforcing obedience, either in his own person, or by whatever agents he may see fit to employ. But the picture of original Methodism which is now presented to us, exhibits the political anomaly of a body without a head. It recognises no legislative assembly to make such laws as circumstances would occasionally require—no supreme authority extending over and controlling the whole. Is it said, that the legislative power of the Conference is not denied? There is a *virtual* denial of it. If the judicial power of the Conference was limited to its own members; if the Conference could not interfere, by any such provision as a District-Committee, with either the Societies or their local officers, but the Meetings were, in all local affairs, independent of the Conference;—then the laws were administered, not by the Conference, or by its authority, but by the local meetings, on their own authority. The power of enforcing the laws is thus denied to the Conference, and, by consequence, the power, too, of making laws; for, as it has been shown, these two are so essentially united, that where the latter is not, it is mere talk to say that the former exists. Is it maintained, that the Conference was represented by the Superintendent of the Circuit, who presided in the local meetings? It is answered, the Superintendent is not spoken of as administering the laws, by the authority of the Conference, aided and assisted by the local meetings, as jurisdictions subordinate to the Conference: the local meetings are represented to have been independent, and the Superintendent to have been merely their Chairman. Had this been the case, the Superintendent

* Vol. i., p. 49. Fourth edition, 4to. Oxford.

would, therefore, have carried into effect the decisions of the meetings, not as the representative of the Conference, acting by its authority, but as the organ and servant of the meetings, executing the commission with which they had charged him. Whatever may be admitted in words, the legislative power of the Conference is thus virtually denied. Instead of being spoken of as the supreme authority in Methodism, which made the laws, and enforced them by means of subordinate jurisdictions accountable to itself; it is represented as having had nothing to do with the Circuits, but to appoint Preachers to the chapels, and to take a part in a few temporal and financial arrangements. Such is the anomalous appearance which original Methodism is made to put on, by the representations of certain parties. We can easily conceive of a number of independent States,—each of which has its own legislative assembly, and subordinate jurisdictions for the enforcing of the laws,—all confederated together for some common purpose; and of one of these being vested with a right of limited interference with the others, for the accomplishment of that object which is the end of their union. And if original Methodism had been thus exhibited; if the Circuits had been represented as having each had its own legislative body, with inferior jurisdictions to administer its discipline, and held together only by certain general ties, and that the Conference was allowed to interfere with all the Circuits, in a few respects, for the attainment of the common object of their association,—such a view would have been consistent enough with the theory of government in general. But the representation now made is widely different. It is not contended, that the Societies or Circuits possessed legislative power; the legislative power is virtually denied to the Conference; and we have, therefore, a representation, not of so many bodies politic united in a general bond, but of one body politic without a head, without an authority which is supreme, legislating for, and enforcing its laws upon, the whole.

This view of original Methodism is not more at variance with the fundamental principles of government, than it is with historic fact. Mr. Wesley left the Conference established, by usage, as the supreme authority in Methodism, and possessed, by virtue of the Deed of Declaration, of means for perpetuating its pastoral rule over the body at large; while the local meetings were subordinate jurisdictions, formed for the purpose of aiding, only, in the administration of the laws.

In speaking of the Conference as the “supreme power” in Methodism—as constitutionally possessed of authority to legislate for the Body, it will of course be understood that I only use the expression in reference to that power which every branch of the church of Christ possesses, to frame such Regulations for the management of its affairs, as do in its judgment accord with the fundamental laws of Him who is supreme Legislator in His church on earth, and as it believes to be best calculated to give practical effect to those laws.

But who constituted the Conference? Sometimes mention is made of Mr. Wesley *and* the Conference; but it is not, therefore, to be concluded, that Mr. Wesley was not a member of the Conference. In the Deed of Declaration, which he executed for the purpose of “explaining the words, ‘yearly Conference of the people called Methodists,’ of declaring what persons were members of the Conference, and how the succession and identity thereof was to be continued,”—having shown in general terms who had ever composed the Conference, he then mentions all the members of it by name. This enumeration sets the question at rest. Mr. Wesley and his brother are there included with the Preachers, and they are represented as constituting, together, the Conference.

And the Conference, thus composed, gave to the body all its Laws during the period to which our present inquiry refers. The first Methodist Society, commencing with ten or twenty persons only, was formed in the latter end of the year 1739.* It cannot, however, be said to have had a separate existence till the middle of the following year. A kind of general union subsisted, for a time, between the Methodists and the Moravians; but, towards the close of July, 1740, that general bond was dissolved, and an entire separation took place between them.† How inconsiderable the Methodist Society still was, in regard to numbers, may be seen from Mr. Wesley’s own words. Speaking of this division, he says, “About twenty-five of our brethren God hath given us already, all of whom think and speak the same thing; seven or eight and forty likewise, of the fifty women that were in band, desired to cast in their lot with us.”‡ Before the Society, however, thus took a separate form, several lay-Preachers itinerated with Mr. Wesley.§ Mr. Wesley makes mention of one as early as 1738,|| a year before any Society was formed at all. The fact then is not that Mr. Wesley, in the first instance, raised and organized a large Society, before he called in the aid of lay-Preachers. Lay-Preachers were associated with him from the beginning; and the Society may rather be said to have been raised by the blessing of God resting on his and their joint endeavours. Under such circumstances, Mr. Wesley, as might be expected, associated the Preachers with himself in the management of the Society,—that Society which they had assisted him to originate. For a while, he, with the Preachers, regulated the infant body without *written* laws; but when they commenced meeting periodically for the more effectual transaction of business, they began to commit to writing the Laws by which the body was to be disciplined. The first of their formal meetings, consisting of Mr. Wesley, his brother, four Clergymen, and four lay-Preachers,¶ was held in 1744, four years only after the first establishment of the Society. At that

* See Rules of Society.

† Myles’s Chron. Hist. of the Methodists, 4th edit., p. 15.

‡ Mr. Wesley’s Journal, Wednesday, July 23d, 1740.

§ See Large Minutes.

|| Myles’s Chron. Hist., p. 10.

¶ Ibid. p. 24.

meeting, Mr. Wesley adopted, for the assembly, the appellation of the "Conference;"* and our argument is, that the Conference gave to the Connexion the laws by which it was governed during Mr. Wesley's life.

The principle on which the first Conference commenced its deliberations is deserving of notice, because it proves, that Mr. Wesley did not convene the Preachers for mere show and formality, but that they might really share with himself in the management of the Connexion. In the Minutes of that Conference, drawn up by Mr. Wesley himself, among other things, he says, "It is desired, that every point which is proposed may be examined to the foundation; that every person may speak freely whatever is in his heart; and that every question which may arise should be thoroughly debated and settled." Among the questions which are proposed, he asks, "How far does *each of us* agree to submit to the judgment of *the majority*?" and the question is answered, "In speculative things each can only submit so far as his judgment shall be convinced; in every practical point each will submit so far as he can without wounding his conscience." It is thus evident, that however great was Mr. Wesley's authority, whatever deference was paid to him as the Father of the Connexion, the very first Conference proceeded to business on the principle, that the sense of the majority should be respected.

And it was not merely such business as concerned themselves, only, which was to be settled on this principle. The object of the Meeting is stated in the same Minutes to be, "To consider, 1. What to teach: 2. How to teach: and, 3. What to do: that is, how to regulate our doctrine, discipline, and practice." And the deliberations of the Meeting were not to be confined to what should be done in all those matters in future; but they were retrospective also. The Conference did not begin on the supposition, that what was then in existence in Methodism could not be touched. Mr. Wesley, in the Minutes, encourages the most rigorous examination of their "first principles," declaring that, if these are false, the sooner they are overturned the better. The business of the first Conference, then, was to examine, for the purpose of altering or confirming, the "principles" on which they had been founding Methodism, and to make such provision for the management of the body, in future, as should be deemed necessary. The first subjects which were debated for two days were their great doctrinal "principles;" which having confirmed, they then proceeded to examine and confirm those "principles" of discipline on which they had been acting, and to make such new Regulations as the circumstances of the body at large required.

The view which the Minutes of the first Conference thus afford, of the end contemplated by Mr. Wesley, in the institution of the Conference, is expressly confirmed, in a letter to Mr. M——, under date of January, 1780; only eleven years before the close of his lengthened

* Myles's Chron. Hist., p. 25.

life. In that letter, he remarks, "You seem likewise to have a wrong idea of a *Conference*. For above six years after my return to England, there was no such thing. I then desired some of our Preachers to meet me, in order to advise, not control, me. And you may observe, they had no power at all, but what I exercised through them. *I chose to exercise the power which God had given me in this manner, both to avoid ostentation, and gently to habituate the people to obey them when I should be taken from their head.*"* Mr. Wesley, in this quotation, appears as the expositor of his own plans and intentions. Although, as the Founder of Methodism, he was the source and centre of all power in the body, and was ever ready, as occasion offered, to assert that power by both his pen and his acts; he steadily prosecuted the object which he had contemplated, from the beginning, of so associating the Preachers with himself in the exercise of his power, that the people might become accustomed to obey *them*, also, and that the Conference might thus become established, by *usage*, as the head of the Connexion, when he might be removed by death.

The laws which emanated from the first and succeeding Conferences for the government of the whole body, may be divided into two classes:—

1. Those which related to spiritual matters:
2. Those which referred to temporal concerns.

On adverting to the first class, it appears that the conditions of membership were settled by the Conference. Mr. Wesley had, only a few months before the first formal meeting of himself and the Preachers in Conference, drawn up, in writing, the Rules by which, as to their substance, they had been admitting persons into the Society, and excluding them from it; and, on the meeting of the Conference, these Rules were carefully investigated, and then confirmed.† This examination of the Rules was repeated in succeeding Conferences, with a view to ascertain whether any change was necessary; and, as often as they were reviewed, they received again the solemn sanction of the Conference. What was done respecting them at the Conference of 1756, which was held at Bristol, and at which nearly fifty Preachers were present, may be given in Mr. Wesley's own words. "The Rules of the Society," he says, "were read over, and carefully considered one by one; but we did not find that any could be spared, so we *all agreed* to abide by them all." "The Rules of the bands were read over and considered one by one, which, after some verbal alterations, we *all agreed* to observe and enforce."

The manner and the times of public worship were determined by the Conference. Not only the hymns to be sung, and the tunes to be used, but even the manner of singing was settled by its authority.

The Regulations under which persons should exhort, or engage as

* Wesley's Works, vol. xiii., p. 114. 8vo. 1831. † Myles's Chron. Hist., p. 34.

Local Preachers, were laid down, and most explicitly, too, by the Conference.

On examining the second class of its laws, we find the Conference legislating on almost all the temporal matters of the Society. The steps to be taken in the building of chapels,—how the expense was to be met,—how they were to be settled,—even what was to be the form of the chapels, were all regulated by the Rules of the Conference. The collections in the congregations, whether regular or casual, with the times when they were to be made, were also decided by its authority. The Conference determined how much the members should contribute weekly, and quarterly, to the support of the cause; what should be the salary which the Societies should allow their Preachers; what they should provide for the Preachers' wives; and enacted that the expenses of the Preachers' travelling to the Conference should be paid by the Circuits.

An instance may be produced to show, that the laws of the Conference respecting temporal matters were not a dead letter. The Conference of 1752 had directed, that the Societies should pay the Preachers twelve pounds per annum; and, in 1765, a deputation from a distant Circuit came to the Conference assembled at Manchester, to pray for an alteration of the Rule,—twelve pounds being regarded by them as too large a sum: but their suit was rejected, and the Rule confirmed.*

With respect to the laws by which the Methodist body was governed during Mr. Wesley's life, it may be confidently affirmed, that they all issued from the Conference. The "whole Methodist discipline" was digested and promulgated, not by any of the local meetings on the one hand, nor by Mr. Wesley alone on the other, but by Mr. Wesley with the Preachers assembled in Conference. The inquiry—What was the legal record of the laws of original Methodism? is, of itself, sufficient to lead to conviction on this point. If we wish to know what were the laws of the body during Mr. Wesley's life, whether do we refer? To the record of any local meeting or meetings? To the Works of Mr. Wesley? No: but to the "Minutes of the Conference." The Conference, then, was the "supreme power," the legislative body: else how could its Minutes be the only legal record of the laws?† This consideration shows, moreover, the propriety of our adopting that definition of "the Conference," which Mr. Wesley gives in the Deed of Declaration. Were we, from the mention sometimes met with of Mr. Wesley *and* the Conference, to suppose, that he was not included in the Conference, we should have then to come

* Myles's Chron. Hist., p. 76.

† In the Vice-Chancellor's Court, in 1835, in the case of "Warren v. Burton and others," Sir William Horne, the leading Counsel for the defendants, sustained this view of the subject, and "contended, that the intention of the Founder and whole body of Methodists had always been, to consider the Minutes of Conference as the statute law by which all temporal and spiritual matters were to be governed."

to the conclusion, that the laws were made and promulgated by the Preachers alone.

The Conference is now to be viewed as providing for the execution of its laws. The administration of the laws was vested in Mr. Wesley, his clerical associates, and the Assistant Preachers and Helpers; and to these were added various local officers, who were created as the occasion required. The first time the Conference met, formally, we find it describing the powers which the various officers of Methodism should exercise. The following is a list which it gives of the officers employed in the as yet infant Society: "Ministers, (that is, Clergymen,) Assistants, Helpers, Stewards, Leaders of bands, Leaders of classes, visitors of the sick, schoolmasters, and housekeepers." The only meetings of the local authorities which were then recognised, were the weekly Meeting of the Leaders, and the weekly Meeting of the Stewards. The business of these Meetings is distinctly marked out. The Leaders were to meet once a week, to inform the Minister of the state of their classes, and to pay to the Stewards the moneys received from their classes in the preceding week. The Stewards were to meet weekly, to adjust the temporal affairs of the Society, and to give such information, on local affairs, to Mr. Wesley, as might assist him in that general superintendence of the Connexion, which he retained through life.* Now, in all this is witnessed the exercise of supreme authority. Had not the Conference been the "supreme power," what would it have had to do with determining the powers of the officers in Methodism, with marking out the limits of its local jurisdictions? The Leaders'-Meetings and Stewards'-Meetings might, with as much propriety and right, have set themselves to determine the powers of the Conference, and to mark out and limit its jurisdiction.

As Methodism kept making advances from a state of infancy towards maturity, new officers and new jurisdictions were introduced; as, for instance, Circuit-Stewards, and Circuit Quarterly-Meetings. The Connexion was not divided into Circuits till the year 1746. From this period Quarterly-Meetings are recognised in the Minutes, as part of the Methodist economy. The Quarterly-Meeting, composed of the Preachers, the Circuit-Stewards, and the Stewards of the different Societies, appears to have taken the place of the weekly Meeting of the Stewards; and the end of its institution, as we learn from the Minutes, was to afford to the Assistant an opportunity of reviewing the spiritual state of the Circuit, and to settle its temporal affairs.†

In 1763 an extensive jurisdiction was formed, with a view to promote a closer union of the whole Methodist body. The subject had been started some time before; but, at the Conference, it was formally discussed and determined, that London should be the centre of com-

* Myles's Chron. Hist., p. 34.

† Minutes of Conference, vol. i., p. 40.

munication, and that the Stewards of that Society should correspond with the Stewards of other Societies, and give such advice in temporal matters as might seem good to them. This jurisdiction, however, not answering the expectations which had been entertained of it, was, after a time, abolished. But who, or what body, we ask, is this, which is seen making such alterations in the Connexion, by dividing it into Circuits,—which is beheld creating jurisdictions, and abolishing them at pleasure? The Stewards, or Leaders'-Meetings? No; but the Conference. This, then, affords another view of the supreme authority of the Conference. Blackstone, in the quotation above, says, "That it is at any time in the option of the Legislature to alter the administration of the Government, and to put the administration of the laws into whatever hands it pleases." But we have seen the Conference making laws for the Connexion, providing for the execution of its laws, as it saw good, and then altering and modifying the administration at its own discretion: the Conference, therefore, certainly was the "supreme power" in the Connexion.

The powers of the different officers and jurisdictions of Methodism, as the constitution appeared in its settled and matured state towards the close of Mr. Wesley's life, now claim attention.

In the first place, the formal meeting of the local authorities was not legal, without the Preacher being present to preside. In the Conference of 1776, it was stated, that, in Ireland, part of the Leaders met without any connexion with, or dependence on, the Assistant; and it was decided, (and the Rule was never rescinded or modified,) "We have no such custom in the three kingdoms. It is overturning our discipline from the foundations. Either let them act under the direction of the Assistant, or let them meet no more. It is true they can contribute money for the poor; but we dare not sell our discipline for money." *

In the next instance, the local jurisdictions had no *directing* or *controlling* power in *spiritual* affairs. In the Leaders'-Meeting, all that the Leaders had to do in these matters, was to give information on the state of their classes; and, in the Quarterly-Meetings, the Preacher inquired into the spiritual state of the whole Circuit; but this was all that either Meeting had to do with spiritual affairs. The enforcing of the discipline was vested in the Preacher, independently of the Meeting. The Leaders'-Meeting had no voice as to the persons to be taken into Society, or excluded from it. In an early period of Methodism, a direction was given to the Preacher to allow a person to meet a few times in class before he gave a ticket, that he might have the opinion of the Leader to guide him; but no controlling power was vested by that regulation in the Leaders'-Meeting. The Leaders'-Meeting had nothing to do with the appointment or removal of Leaders, nor had either Meeting a voice in the appointment or chang-

* Minutes of the Conference, vol. i., p. 126.

ing of Stewards: this was entirely vested in the Preacher. In the Conference of 1787, only little more than three years before Mr. Wesley's death, it was ordered, "Inform the Leaders, that every Assistant is to change both the Stewards and Leaders as he sees good." The local meetings had no control over public worship. This was in the hands of the Preachers. They, and not the meetings, were responsible for the conducting of public worship according to the regulations of the Conference. How little power the Leaders'-Meeting possessed may be judged from the fact, that the Leaders were directed to sit in silence on their assembling together, until the Preacher should enter the room; and, during the meeting, they were not allowed to speak a single word, except in answer to a question from the Preacher or Steward.*

The jurisdiction of the Stewards was over temporal matters. The reason assigned by Mr. Myles, why the plan of uniting the Societies more closely, through the medium of the Stewards, failed, was,—because these officers had nothing to do with anything but the *temporal* affairs of their respective Societies. And, in this their jurisdiction over temporal matters, the Stewards were under the control of the Preachers. The Preachers had the supervision of *all* temporal affairs. In 1763 the Conference, in marking out the power of the Assistant, directed that he should "inquire diligently into the *temporal*, as well as spiritual, state of the Society;" and, in the "office of a Helper," the same Conference determines it to be a Helper's duty, "to meet the Leaders and Stewards and overlook their accounts," and to see "that the Stewards and Leaders faithfully discharge their several offices."

A clearer view of the ordinary administration of original Methodism cannot be given, than what is afforded by Mr. Wesley himself. In the year 1771, when the constitution of Methodism had acquired that settled and consistent state in which it remained to the end of his life, Mr. Wesley visited Dublin, for the purpose of rectifying certain disorders which had originated in the Society there. Having thoroughly investigated the business, he then read over to the Leaders the following paper:—

1. That it may be more easily discerned whether the members of our Societies are working out their own salvation, they are divided into little companies, called classes. One person in each of these is styled the Leader: it is his business, (1.) To see each person in his class once a week; to inquire how their souls prosper; to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort them. (2.) To receive what they are willing to give towards the expenses of the Society; and, (3.) To meet the Assistant and the Stewards once a week.

2. This is the whole and sole business of a Leader, or any number of Leaders. But it is common for the Assistant in any place when several Leaders are met together, to ask their advice, as to anything that concerns either the temporal or spiritual welfare of the Society. This he may or he may not do, as he sees best. I frequently do it in the larger Societies: and, on many occasions, I have found, that in a multitude of counsellors there is safety.

* Extract from the Minutes published in 1763.

3. From this short view of the original design of Leaders, it is easy to answer the following questions:—

Q. 1. What authority has a single Leader?

He has authority to meet his class; to receive their contributions, and to visit the sick in his class.

Q. 2. What authority have all the Leaders of a Society met together?

They have authority to show their class-papers to the Assistant; to deliver the money they have received to the Stewards, and to bring in the names of the sick.

Q. 3. But have they not authority to restrain the Assistant, if they think he acts improperly?

No more than any member of the Society has. After mildly speaking to him, they are to refer the thing to Mr. W.

Q. 4. Have they not authority to hinder a person from preaching?

None but the Assistant has this authority.

Q. 5. Have they not authority to displace a particular Leader?

No more than the door-keeper has. To place and to displace Leaders belongs to the Assistant alone.

Q. 6. Have they not authority to expel a particular member of the Society?

No; the Assistant only can do this.

Q. 7. But have they not authority to regulate the temporal and spiritual affairs of the Society?

Neither the one nor the other. Temporal affairs belong to the Stewards; spiritual to the Assistant.

Q. 8. Have they authority to make any collection of a public nature?

No: the Assistant only can do this.

Q. 9. Have they authority to receive the yearly subscription?

No: this also belongs to the Assistant.

Considering these things, can we wonder at the confusion which has been here for some years?

If one wheel of a machine gets out of its place, what disorder must ensue!

In the Methodist discipline, the wheels regularly stand thus: the Assistant, the Preachers, the Stewards, the Leaders, the people.

But here the Leaders, who are the lowest wheel but one, were got quite out of their place. They were got at the top of all, above the Stewards, the Preachers, yea, and above the Assistant himself.

5. To this chiefly I impute the gradual decay of the work of God in Dublin.

There has been a jar throughout the whole machine. Most of the wheels were hindered in their motion. The Stewards, the Preachers, the Assistant, all moved heavily. They felt all was not right. But if they saw where the fault lay, they had not strength to remedy it.

But it may be effectually remedied now. Without rehearsing former grievances, (which may all die and be forgotten,) for the time to come, let each wheel keep its own place. Let the Assistant, the Preachers, the Stewards, the Leaders, know and execute their several offices. Let none encroach upon another, but all move together in harmony and love. So shall the work of God flourish among you, perhaps as it never did before; while you all hold the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.

As yet, however, we have no mention of Local-Preachers' Meetings. Some time previous to the death of Mr. Wesley, the Assistants had met the Local Preachers occasionally, more especially when the new Circuit-Plans were about to be made; but, from the great extent of many of the Circuits, this could not be a universal practice. It was not till the year 1796, five years after Mr. Wesley's death, that any *formal* recognition was made of Local-Preachers' Meetings. Then it was enacted, that, from that time, wherever it should be found practicable, the Superintendent should meet the Local Preachers, every quarter; and that, instead of its being left entirely to the Assistant

to take on the Plan whomsoever he saw fit, none should thenceforward be admitted but those who were approved of at that Meeting, or at the Quarterly-Meetings of the Circuit, where Local-Preachers' Meetings could not be held.

The *regular* and *ordinary* administration of the laws of Methodism, it is thus seen, was, in every Circuit, vested in the Assistant and Helpers; and the business of the local officers and meetings was to assist the Preachers, by their advice and other friendly offices,—and this was the whole of their business. The local officers, viewed either singly or collectively, had no powers by which they could, constitutionally, *control* or *resist* the Preacher. They were merely the *council* of the Assistant; and their advice he could adopt or reject as he saw good. In the "Rules" the Steward, who, according to Mr. Wesley's description of the wheels of Methodism, is the highest local officer, is thus addressed by the Conference:—"Remember you are not the master of the Assistant, but his friend; therefore, always speak to him as such." To offer friendly counsel was all that the first of local officers could do.

We have yet, however, to see, more clearly, what department in the executive was filled by Mr. Wesley. In him was vested the *general superintendence* of the whole Society. He had not the *ordinary* charge of any single Circuit: this the Assistant had. He was constantly travelling from place to place, examining the state of the Societies, and rectifying whatever disorders he found, whether among Preachers or people. This prominent feature of original Methodism—the ordinary, every-day administration being vested in the Assistants, and the supervision of the whole in Mr. Wesley—is clearly perceptible in the very infancy of the body. In the first Conference which was held, Mr. Wesley asks, "With whom should we correspond? And how often?" And the answer recorded is, "Once a month with each Assistant; and with some one other person (at least) in each Society." And in that extract from the preceding Minutes, which was published in 1763, the Conference, in describing the duties of an Assistant, directs him to travel with Mr. Wesley, if required, once a year, through the Societies in his Circuit. The proceedings of Mr. Wesley at Dublin, at the time when he read the foregoing paper, are a specimen of the manner in which he exercised this general superintendence; and as it will be found of service, in our future inquiries, to have a clear view of the extent of this interference with the *ordinary* administration, we will give his own account of the steps he took on that occasion. Having mentioned his arrival in Dublin, he says, "I immediately set myself to inquire into the state of the Society. It was plain there had been a continual jar for at least two years past, which had stumbled the people, weakened the hands of the Preachers, and greatly hindered the work of God. I wanted to know the ground of this; and, that I might do nothing rashly, determined to hear the parties, separately first, and then face to face. Having already talked

with the Preachers, I talked this evening with the Leaders at large : and, from the spirit which appeared in all, I had a good hope that all hinderances would be removed. On Wednesday evening I met the Leaders again, and gave them an opportunity of explaining themselves further. And on Friday I appointed an *extraordinary* meeting, at which some spoke with much warmth ; but I tempered them on each side, so that they parted in peace." On the following Sunday he says again, "The Leaders, Stewards, and Preachers spoke their minds freely to each other. I now saw the whole evil might be removed, all parties being desirous of peace. On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday I visited the classes, and found a general faintness had run through the Society." Having thus fully inquired into the affair, and found out who were the disturbers of the peace, he then read to the Leaders the paper which has been given at length in a preceding page.

In this instance, the business was settled without any expulsions having been made ; but when he saw it necessary, he removed Stewards or Leaders from office, and excluded members from Society. Whoever will look over his Journal, will find him making not unfrequent mention of his having done so. He did not, however, always make the expulsions himself ; but directed the Assistant-Preacher, who had the care of the Circuit, to do it. This was the case on one occasion at Birstal, near Leeds. He had removed, it would appear, a Leader from his office ; but the Leader proving refractory, he wrote to Mr. Valton, the Preacher, in the following words :—"I cannot allow J. S. to be any longer a Leader ; and if he will lead the class, whether I will or no, I require you to put him out of our Society. If twenty of his class will leave the Society too, they must. The first loss is the best. Better forty members should be lost, than our discipline lost. They are no Methodists that will bear no restraints. Explain this at large to the Society."*

When he saw it necessary, Mr. Wesley reproved the Preachers also, or silenced them, if their offence was of such a nature as to deserve it. The first Preacher who was excluded from the Connexion was James Wheatley, in the year 1752. The letter which Mr. Wesley addressed to him, and which was signed by his brother Charles also, is preserved. The conclusion is interesting ; because it shows how, at that very early period, Mr. Wesley, in his proceedings, practically recognised the Conference as the court where the *final* decision, in such cases, was to be made. "The least and lowest proof of such repentance which we can receive is this : that, till our *next Conference*, you abstain from preaching, and practising physic. If you do not, we are clear ; we cannot answer for the consequence." Why specify the Conference, if he did not mean that the business was to be *finally* settled there ?

That Mr. Wesley should thus make such a practical recognition of the Conference in such matters, is not, however, to be wondered at,

* Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, May, 1824.

when it is borne in mind, that, from the beginning, it was settled that all admissions into the body of Preachers, and expulsions from it, should be made at the Conference. In the very first Conference, it was asked by Mr. Wesley, "What method may we use in receiving a new Helper?" The answer recorded is, "A proper time for doing this is at a Conference, after solemn fasting and prayer; we may then receive him as a probationer." "If he can, let him come to the next Conference, where, after examination, fasting, and prayer, he may be received into full connexion with us." And, in the Deed of Declaration, it was expressly stated, that one part of the business which was transacted at the Conference was, the receiving of new members into the body, or candidates on trial, and the expelling of unworthy members. Hence, as whoever consults the Minutes will see, "What Preachers are admitted this year? Who are admitted on trial? What Preachers are laid aside (or desist from travelling) this year?" became, as the body increased, regular questions in Conference. When these facts are kept in view, it is certainly no more than might be expected, that Mr. Wesley, when, in the exercise of that general superintendence which he retained, he saw it necessary in the course of the year to silence a Preacher, should be found referring to the Conference, as the court where the final decision on his case should be made.

While we thus contemplate original Methodism in the light of history and its own official documents, how remote from the truth does the assumption appear to which we adverted on commencing our inquiry! So far from Mr. Wesley having left the local jurisdictions, confirmed by custom, in that state of independence which is now contended for, they were only subordinate branches of the executive, whose business was to assist the Preachers in the maintenance of discipline, but having no power to resist or control them. The Conference was, by virtue of established usage, the "supreme power;" and Mr. Wesley, and even the Preachers of the Circuits,—members of its own body,—could exclude persons from Society, and remove Stewards and Leaders, when necessary, independently of the local meetings. So that not only the legislative, but the executive, power, also, was, to every practical purpose, in the hands of Mr. Wesley and the Preachers. That this state of things should have been continued, is not my argument. I am very far from maintaining, that the administration of the laws should be left, without any restraint, in the hands of those who make them. What I mean to vindicate is Methodism as it was modified by the Regulations of 1795 and 1797, which Regulations give to local meetings a real controlling power, by which they can effectually restrain the Preachers from abusing their authority. All I have to do with on this part of the subject is historical fact. I am merely endeavouring to show what the constitution of original Methodism really was, that we may have a clue to guide us in our inquiry as to what Methodism now is.

In proving, as I have done, that, in original Methodism, the Conference was the supreme authority, and that the executive was so fully in the hands of Mr. Wesley and the Preachers, that the local meetings could offer no constitutional resistance, I have, of course, at the same time, made it apparent, that that interpretation of the Deed of Declaration to which I at first adverted cannot be correct. It will, however, be important to inquire into the true design of that celebrated instrument. Its object was, to give such a legal specification of the Conference as would ever secure for that assembly, in the exercise of its right of appointing Preachers to the chapels, the protection of the law of the land.

In the settlement of the chapels, the great object which had been kept in view from the beginning was, to secure to the people, in perpetuity, the preaching of the same doctrine, and the exercise of the same discipline, for the sake of which the chapels were built; and one in the order of means for the attainment of that end was the right vested in Mr. Wesley and the Conference to appoint Preachers to the chapels. The first chapel which was built was, in the first instance, settled on eleven feoffees; but Mr. Wesley, becoming convinced, by a letter from Mr. Whitefield, that they could exclude even himself from it whenever they thought proper, instantly saw that such a mode of settlement would endanger the perpetuity of Methodism. Calling together the feoffees, he therefore took the chapel into his own hands; and, having got a form of trust-deed drawn up by three eminent Barristers, he had that, and the chapels generally, as they were built, settled in accordance therewith. That plan—the same which, with some additions, is still used among us—placed the chapels in the hands of Trustees, and vested the right of appointing Preachers to them, first, in Mr. Wesley, and, after his death, in the Conference.

It was not till towards the close of Mr. Wesley's life, that a defect was discovered in this mode of settlement. It was then ascertained that the law would not recognise and secure to the Conference the exercise of its right in appointing to the chapels, without the names of the persons composing the Conference being specified. This produced a great sensation in the body of the Preachers, who became solicitous to have some method devised for remedying the defect, before Mr. Wesley should be removed. An extract from the Address of Dr. Coke to the Societies, written about a year previous to Mr. Wesley's death, will tend to place in a clear light the circumstances under which the Deed of Declaration originated:—

“In the Conference, held in the year 1782, several complaints were made in respect to the danger in which we were situated, from the want of specifying, in distinct and legal terms, what was meant by the term, ‘The Conference of the People called Methodists.’ Indeed, the Preachers seemed universally alarmed, and many expressed their fears, that divisions would take place among us, after the death of Mr. Wesley, on this account. And the whole body of Preachers present

seemed to wish that some methods might be taken to remove this danger, which appeared to be pregnant with evils of the first magnitude.

"In consequence of this, (the subject lying heavy on my mind,) I desired Mr. Clulow, of Chancery-Lane, London, to draw up such a case as I should judge sufficient for the purpose, and then to present it to that very eminent Counsellor, Mr. Maddox, for his opinion. This was accordingly done; and Mr. Maddox informed us in his answer, that the deeds of our preaching-houses were in the situation we dreaded; that the law would not recognise the Conference, in the state in which it stood at that time; and, consequently, that there was no central point which might preserve the Connexion from splitting into a thousand pieces, after the death of Mr. Wesley. To prevent this, he observed, that Mr. Wesley should enrol a Deed in Chancery, which Deed should specify the persons by name who composed the Conference, together with the mode of succession for its perpetuity; and at the same time, such Regulations be established by the Deed, as Mr. Wesley would wish the Conference should be governed by after his death.

"This opinion of Mr. Maddox, I read in the Conference held in the year 1783. The whole Conference seemed grateful to me for procuring the opinion; and expressed their wish, that such a Deed might be drawn up, and executed by Mr. Wesley, as should agree with the advice of that great Lawyer, as soon as possible." *

With this account accords the Declaration which was made at the Conference in 1785, (five years before the Doctor's Address was written,) by the Preachers who had attended the Conference of 1783. "We, whose names are underwritten, do declare, that Mr. Wesley was desired at the last Bristol Conference, without a dissentient voice, to draw up a Deed which should give a legal specification of the phrase, 'The Conference of the People called Methodists:' and that the mode of doing it was entirely left to his judgment and discretion." †

To advert again to the Doctor. After the extract just quoted, he goes on to detail, that Mr. Wesley authorised him to draw up, with the assistance of Mr. Clulow, such a Deed as should answer the above purposes, and that the Deed was filled up with the names of the Preachers, and completed as the law required.

A difficulty occurred respecting the number of names which should be inserted. Dr. Coke thought that all who were in full connexion should be included; but Mr. Wesley preferred the round number of a hundred, making an after-provision, as will be seen, for preserving, in point of practice, equality between the "Hundred" and those who were not in that number. But, although all the Preachers who signed the Declaration above inserted expressed at the same time their approbation of the *substance* and *design* of the Deed, as did the whole Conference of

* Myles's Chron. Hist., p. 199.

† Minutes of Conference, 1785.

1785, in another Declaration to which they also affixed their names ; * yet there was great dissatisfaction cherished by some, whose names were not included in the Hundred ; and a small number of Preachers, after a while, actually left the Connexion. The great majority, however, acquiesced in the arrangement ; and, in time, confidence was restored among the brethren.

Now, on examining this important document, we find it recognising the Conference in that character under which we have viewed it. It speaks of the Conference as meeting from year to year ; and says that all the matters transacted during its sittings had been annually published, under the title of "Minutes of Conference." But as the Conference, at its periodical sittings, enacted all the laws by which the Society at large was governed ; and recorded and published those laws in its "Minutes," which "Minutes" were the only legal record of the laws of Methodism ; it follows, that this is, in fact, an acknowledgment of the Conference as the supreme authority of the Connexion. Then, having enumerated the names of Mr. Wesley and his brother, and the others making up the Hundred, it declares, that these do, and that they and their successors ever shall, constitute the said Conference ; and that all *their* acts when recorded, in due form, in the "Journals or Minutes of the Conference," shall be received as the acts of the *Conference*. This important instrument thus recognises, in substance, all the powers and prerogatives which were exercised by Mr. Wesley and the Preachers, assembled in Conference ; and secures for the Conference the enjoyment of them after Mr. Wesley's death, by placing it under the protection of the law, in the exercise of its right of appointing to the chapels. That paragraph which has been understood as limiting the judicial power of the Conference, is only one of those "Regulations" which have for their primary and leading object, to perpetuate the Conference in the eye of the law, by enabling it ever to keep that determinate form which the law could recognise.

That Mr. Wesley, by associating, from the beginning, the Preachers with himself in the government of the Connexion, and securing to them the right of appointing to the chapels after his death, did design that the government should ever remain in their hands, the whole tenor of his conduct proved. The management of the Society, after his removal, was with him a subject of deep and constant solicitude. So early as the year 1749, it was asked in Conference, what was to be done should Mr. Wesley die ; and Mr. Wesley advised, that all the Assistants should immediately go to London and consult together. Not a word did he say of consulting with the people, or with any of the local officers of the Societies, but that they were to advise with one another.† In 1769, the question was again formally discussed in Conference, how the body was to be preserved *one* after Mr. Wesley's death ; and Mr. Wesley recommended that all the Preachers, both in

* Minutes of Conference, 1785.

† Ibid., 1749.

England and Ireland, should repair to London within six weeks after his death,—that they should draw up articles of agreement to be signed by themselves,—that those of the Preachers who would not act in concert with them should be dismissed,—that they should choose a Committee, one of the members of which should be Moderator,—and that that Committee should propose Preachers to be tried, admitted, or excluded, and appoint the Preachers for the ensuing year. Mr. Wesley being the Father of the Conference as well as of the whole Society, always presided in Conference, and managed that part of the business of Conference; and he designed this Committee, with its Moderator, to occupy, in these respects, his place in Conference. Having given this advice, he then asked the question, “Can anything be done now, in order to lay a foundation for this future union? Would it not be well, for any that are willing, to sign some articles of agreement before God calls me hence?” Articles were then drawn up, and signed by the whole Conference; and copies were sent to all the Assistants not present, for them and their Helpers to consider.* These articles were again brought forward in the Conferences of 1773, 1774, and 1775, and confirmed by each of them in succession.†

One of the articles thus agreed upon, was to enforce the whole Methodist discipline: but how could Mr. Wesley ask the Conference to engage to do this, if he did not regard it in the light of the supreme authority of the Connexion, and as remaining such after himself should be removed by death? Blackstone, as we have seen, says, “All the other powers must obey the legislative power in the execution of their several functions.” It is, then, the legislative or supreme power only which can compel the executive to do its duty. To apply this to the case in question:—The administration of Methodism was, in every Circuit, vested in the hands of the Preachers aided by the local authorities; but, if the Preacher and the local authorities in any Circuit should refuse to do their duty, nothing, save the supreme power, could coerce them; but the Conference is called on by Mr. Wesley to engage, in the most unqualified manner, to do this and everything else necessary for the maintenance of the whole discipline: Mr. Wesley must, therefore, have calculated that the Conference would remain the supreme authority in Methodism when he should be no more.

Although this plan was modified when it was found necessary to execute the Deed of Declaration, yet a review of all those proceedings, at different periods in Methodism, is important, because it furnishes additional confirmation to the fact, that Mr. Wesley ever intended the government of the Methodist Connexion to be perpetuated in the Conference; and that his object in those arrangements was to have a plan settled and agreed upon by the Preachers themselves, as to the manner in which his own place in the Conference should be filled up, so that when his death might take place, there might be no jarring or

* Minutes of Conference, 1769.

† Minutes of those years.

contention among them, but that all things might go on quietly and harmoniously.

That the conclusion to which we thus come respecting Mr. Wesley's views and designs is correct, his letter, addressed to the Conference to be read at its first sitting after his death, may be produced in confirmation. The writing of this letter was the method which he adopted for preserving, in point of practice, equality between the Preachers of the Hundred and their brethren. He had enjoyed, throughout his lengthened life, so many and unequivocal proofs of the profound veneration with which he was regarded by both the Preachers and people, as encouraged him to hope that his dying request would have its proper effect. No apology will be needed for giving this letter at length :—

TO THE METHODIST CONFERENCE.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,

Chester, April 7th, 1785.

SOME of our Travelling Preachers have expressed a fear, that, after my decease, you would exclude them either from preaching in connexion with you, or from some other privileges which they now enjoy. I know no other way to prevent any such inconvenience, than to leave these my last words with you.

I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you never avail yourselves of the Deed of Declaration, to assume any superiority over your brethren; but let all things go on, among those Itinerants who choose to remain together, exactly in the same manner as when I was with you, so far as circumstances will permit.

In particular, I beseech you, if you ever loved me, and if you now love God and your brethren, to have no respect of persons, in stationing the Preachers, in choosing children for Kingswood-school, in disposing of the Yearly Contribution and the Preachers'-Fund, or any other public money. But do all things with a single eye, as I have done from the beginning. Go on thus, doing all things without prejudice or partiality, and God will be with you even to the end.

JOHN WESLEY.

Nor was the confidence of Mr. Wesley ill-founded. The assembling of the Conference for the first time without him, and the reading of his letter, formed one of those touching scenes which it is more easy to conceive than describe. His "last words" to the Conference were as the "commandment" of "the son of Rechab" to his children. (Jer. xxxv.) The Conference immediately passed and recorded the following Resolution :—

The Conference have unanimously resolved, that all the Preachers who are in full connexion with them, shall enjoy every privilege that the members of the Conference enjoy, agreeably to the above-written letter of our venerable deceased Father in the Gospel.*

* Minutes of Conference, 1791. Mr. Wesley's affecting letter, and this Resolution which was adopted in reference thereto by the bereaved Assembly, were read by Mr. (now Baron) Rolfe, one of the Counsel, for the Defendants, in Dr. Warren's case, in the Court of Chancery, 1835; and the learned Counsel, at the same time, in answer to a question from the Lord Chancellor, thus explained the *privilege* which was conceded to those Preachers who were not of the Hundred, to attend the Conference, and take part in its deliberations, although the final decision of every question was reserved to the Legal Hundred :—"Your Lordship is not to infer that one hundred members alone attend the Conference. The Conference consists of the Hundred senior Preachers. I believe there are exceptions to that; but, generally

Now when we connect the foregoing letter with all those proceedings to which we have adverted, and keep in mind that the favourite object of Mr. Wesley was to preserve the body *one*, we are led, irresistibly, to the conclusion, that it was a settled point in his own mind, that the Conference was ever to remain the supreme authority of the Connexion. He is never found anticipating, by the plans and measures which he recommended, disputes between the Conference and the people on any such question. All that he saw necessary to guard against were divisions among the Preachers themselves; and his design, in what he did, was to have all things so settled by previous arrangement, that when he should die, his place might at once be filled up, and the whole machine continue to work without interruption.

On a subject of so much moment it is important to know, what were the views of the Preachers themselves. Was there anything in the conduct of the Conference, on Mr. Wesley's death, which manifested indecision or doubt as to the extent of its power? There was not. After the Preachers had met, and had, by choosing a President, and appointing District-Committees, filled two departments vacated by Mr. Wesley's removal, they then went on with the usual business of the Conference, regulating the affairs of the whole Connexion as though nothing had happened. Were the few paragraphs expunged, which have reference to the death of Mr. Wesley, the Minutes of that year could not be distinguished from those of former years. The same tone is preserved, and the same powers are seen in exercise, as usual.

It is moreover desirable to know in what light the body at large viewed this important subject. On the death of Mr. Wesley disputes took place. The jealousies among the Preachers lest some should acquire an undue pre-eminence over their brethren, did not all at once die away. There were, also, disputes between the Preachers, and Trustees and people, on the subject of the Sacraments; and afterwards on other subjects. These contentions we shall have to dwell on more

speaking, it is of the Hundred senior Preachers. Every Preacher is put at first upon what may be called a trial; and your Lordship will see that at all these Conferences there is almost always a question entered upon the Minutes:—'What Preachers are admitted upon trial?' Then they enumerate them to know whether they are competent, in point of character and learning, to discharge the duties of the office. They remain as Preachers upon trial for four years; and at the end of the four years, if approved of, they are what is called 'received into full connexion.' It may be considered as an analogy between the reception of Deacons and Priests in the Church of England into orders; at least the analogy is not very bad. On being received into full connexion, they are received as ecclesiastical persons. All Preachers in full connexion are allowed, whether by custom, or from whatever cause, occasionally to attend the Conference. They not only attend the Conference, but, I believe, join in their deliberations. They not only join in their deliberations, but they vote; not that their vote has any binding effect, for, although the Conference so constituted comes to a vote, after that vote has been carried by the whole Conference, consisting of the Legal Conference and the Conference by sufferance united, the same questions are afterwards put to the Upper House, if I may so express myself,—the Legal Conference,—and it is their vote that finally carries the measures."

fully hereafter; but this one general conclusion may be deduced from them,—that the question whether the Conference was the supreme authority of the Connexion was not mooted. That was a settled point; and the utmost that the *most* liberal party contended for was, not that the government of the Connexion was not vested in the Conference, but that lay-Delegates should be admitted into the Conference, and thus share with the Preachers in the management of the body. As a proof that this was the utmost of their wishes, when this the *most* liberal party went off under the guidance of Mr. Kilham, they constituted their system on the plan of the body which they had left, and made their Conference also the supreme authority in their Connexion; with this difference, that they modified it according to their wishes, and associated lay-Delegates with the Preachers.

We have now to proceed to the consideration of the District-Committee; and, as it is the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of that institution over the local courts in the Circuits which is more especially assailed, I shall subject to a strict examination the Rules by which District-Committees were established, and regulated during the period to which our present inquiry refers. This thorough investigation of the subject will yield an ample compensation for the time which it will occupy. It will enable us to clear away all the misrepresentations by which this important feature of Methodism has been obscured, and to place its origin and design in the clear and convincing light of truth.

District-Committees were instituted by the Conference the first time when it assembled after Mr. Wesley's death, in the year 1791. The Resolutions by which they were established are the following:—

Q. What Regulations are necessary for the preservation of our whole economy as the Rev. Mr. Wesley left it?

A. Let the three kingdoms be divided into Districts: England into nineteen Districts; Scotland into two; and Ireland into six.

After that enumeration of the Districts which follows, comes another question:—

What directions are necessary concerning the management of the Districts?

A. The Assistant of a Circuit shall have authority to summon the Preachers of his District who are in full connexion, on any critical case which, according to the best of his judgment, merits such an interference. And the said Preachers, or as many of them as can attend, shall assemble at the place and time appointed by the Assistant aforesaid, and shall form a Committee, for the purpose of determining concerning the business on which they are called. They shall choose a Chairman for the occasion; and their decision shall be final till the meeting of the next Conference, when the Chairman of the Committee shall lay the Minutes of their proceedings before the Conference. Provided, nevertheless, that nothing shall be done by any Committee contrary to the Resolutions of the Conference.

The interpretation of this Rule which some parties now offer is,—that the Conference could not mean to empower District-Committees to punish the local officers and members of Society, because the Conference itself had no such power to give,—the sole right of visiting, judicially, the local officers and members of Society having been

secured, by custom, to the local meetings; and that, therefore, this "critical case" could be nothing more than the trial of a Preacher during the intervals of Conference.

It is somewhat surprising, that those who admit such an explanation should not see anything in the Rule itself and in the preceding questions, to awaken suspicions in their minds, as to the correctness of their conclusion on the subject of the power with which the Conference intended to invest District-Committees. In the very first question, the Conference is seen contriving a something to maintain, not a part only, but our *whole* economy: why then, the necessary, and almost self-evident conclusion is—the jurisdiction must be designed to exert a controlling influence over the *whole* body, as well as the Preachers; or how could the *whole* economy be maintained by it? And then, as the Conference speaks of something necessary to be done for this end now that Mr. Wesley was gone, the obvious conclusion again is, that Mr. Wesley's death had rendered it necessary. To an inquiring mind, not labouring under a false impression as to the power of the Conference, the question must have suggested such considerations as these; and would have put it upon the inquiry, what vacuum had been produced by Mr. Wesley's death, which had made such an extensive jurisdiction necessary: and it would soon have been found, from the abundant means of information at command, that a most important department in the executive had become vacant by Mr. Wesley's death; and that the new jurisdiction was intended to supply it.

From the inquiry which has been instituted we have learned, that Mr. Wesley exercised a general superintendence over the whole Connexion—that in the intervals of Conference, he saw that the Preachers, and local officers and members, discharged their respective trusts with fidelity, and removed or suspended them, if faulty, at his discretion. Now, at Mr. Wesley's death, this important department, the highest in the executive, became vacant. The *ordinary* administration of Methodism was settled; but if a Preacher should neglect his duty, or a Circuit be thrown into a state of anarchy, there was then no remedy, Mr. Wesley being dead, until the following Conference. It was, therefore, the care of the Conference, assembling for the first time after Mr. Wesley's death, to provide for any such emergency; and this it did, not by appointing, as was expected to take place by some, an individual or two to take this general superintendence of the whole body; but by constituting the new jurisdiction of District-Committees. This is the view of District-Committees, as to their design, given us by Mr. Myles, who, it is to be remembered, was one of that very Conference, and took a part in its deliberations on the subject. He expressly says, that District-Committees were instituted "to supply the want of Mr. Wesley's general superintendence."

With this information, there is no difficulty in ascertaining the extent of their jurisdiction. If we take the law and examine it, in the first instance, by the ordinary and allowed rules of interpreting lan-

guage, we must conclude that its literal meaning is, that every case of difficulty, without exception, which can occur in a Circuit, is within the jurisdiction of the District-Committee. The Preachers are to be summoned on any "critical case," which, "according to the best of the Superintendent's judgment, merits such an interference,"—and, being met, "they are to determine concerning the business on which they are called,"—and "nothing is to be done contrary to the Resolutions of Conference." Now it must strike every considerate person, that if, as some now endeavour to make it appear, the only business of this new authority was simply to try a Preacher, there could be no necessity for this long and laboured Rule, and for such a waste of strong and comprehensive expressions. If this, after all, had been what it meant, the production of this Rule would, indeed, have furnished an illustration of the mountain in labour.

If this law, by which District-Committees were instituted, be subjected to the usual mode of interpreting laws, that will lead to the same result as the examination of it by the ordinary rules of language in general. One of the common principles applied in the explanation of laws is, that, in endeavouring to ascertain the meaning of the terms in which a law is expressed, respect is to be had to the intention of the Legislator in enacting the law itself. Let this rule, then, be applied to the law in question: the design of the Conference was to fill a department vacated by Mr. Wesley's death; and as that was the general superintendence of the whole Connexion, with all its officers and local jurisdictions, it must therefore be concluded, that the Conference intended the District-Committee to have an authority as extensive as the literal meaning of the law indicates—a power corresponding to that which Mr. Wesley exercised over the whole body. It would have been difficult for the Conference, unless it had descended to particulars, to have framed a Resolution which would have better expressed, than does this Rule, the comprehensive meaning it undoubtedly intended to convey.

With such hints as the question of Conference, itself, gives, and with the means of obtaining full information at hand, it does appear surprising how any one can adopt so erroneous an interpretation of the original law respecting District-Committees, as that which we are now called to expose. But the mistake appears still more glaring when it is found, that the Minutes of the same Conference contain an important comment on the law under consideration. That comment is found in the regulations respecting the appointment of Dr. Coke, as the Irish President for the following year. The first question on the subject is,—“Who is appointed to hold the Conference in Dublin on the first Friday of next July?” The answer is, “Dr. Coke.” Then succeeds another question,—“Are any directions necessary concerning the preceding Minute?” Answered thus,—

No letters of complaint, or on Circuit business, shall be written to England on account of this appointment. The Committees of the Districts shall determine all

appeals whatsoever during the intervals of the Conference: and, therefore, all applications on Society business, during the said intervals, which cannot be determined by the Assistants of the Circuits, shall be made to the Committees only.

In this Rule, the Conference evidently apprehends that, "on account of the Doctor's appointment," the Irish, during the year, would be sending over their complaints and applications to him, as they did to Mr. Wesley: and the Conference tells them, that they are not to do so; that Dr. Coke, although their President, is not intended to fill Mr. Wesley's place, as General Superintendent; that the new jurisdiction of the District-Committees was appointed with that view; and that, therefore, they were to apply, not to Dr. Coke, but to the District-Committees.

And the language of this regulation is a complete illustration of the law instituting District-Committees. "The District-Committees shall determine all appeals whatsoever during the intervals of Conference;" and therefore, because they are appointed to do this, "all applications on Society business" are to be made, in the same intervals, to them. What, in the name of wonder! what relevancy would this talk about "*all appeals whatsoever*," and "*all applications on Society business*," have had to the *one simple case of trying a Preacher*, on receiving an appeal or complaint against him? But, again, the Rule says, that it is such "Society business as cannot be determined by the Assistants of the Circuits," which is to be brought before the District-Committees. Then if, as it is said, the District-Committees were appointed merely to try Preachers; and if, as the same persons maintain, District-Committees were strengthened afterwards, only for the purpose of trying tyrannical Assistants,—the language of the Rule appears more extravagant and absurd than ever. "The Society business" is merely the trial of a Preacher; (which, properly speaking, is no Society business at all;) and then, as the same individuals again, when they come to speak of the Minutes of 1797, make it out, that the "Assistants" were the great and principal transgressors, it would be, that, in most cases, this "Society business" which the "Assistant" could not decide, would be just this—*the trial of himself!* Most wonderful legislators are the Conference of 1791 now made to appear.

From the original law of District-Committees, and the comment on it in the regulations on Dr. Coke's appointment, I pass on to the Rules respecting District-Committees, adopted at the Conferences of the two following years. As these Resolutions will not occupy much room, I prefer inserting them here, to giving them in the form of an appendix:—

1792.—Q. 20. What further regulations shall be made concerning the management of the Districts?

A. 1. All the Preachers of every District respectively, who shall be present at the Conference from time to time, shall meet together as soon as possible after the stations of the Preachers are finally settled, and choose a Chairman for their District out of the present or absent members of the District-Committee.

2. The Chairman so chosen shall have authority to call a Meeting of the Committee of his District, on any application of the Preachers or people, which appears

to him to require it. But he must never individually interfere with any other Circuit but his own.

3. Whenever the Chairman has received any complaint against a Preacher, either from the Preachers or the people, he shall send an exact account of the complaint, in writing, to the person accused, with the name of the accuser or accusers, before he calls a Meeting of the District-Committee to examine into the charge.

4. If it appear, on just grounds, to any Superintendent, that the Chairman of his District has been guilty of any crime or misdemeanour, or that he has neglected to call a Meeting of the District-Committee, when there were sufficient reasons for calling it, such Superintendent shall have authority, in that case, to call a Meeting of the District-Committee, and to fix the time and place of meeting. The Committee thus assembled, shall have power, if they judge necessary, to try the Chairman, and, if found guilty, to suspend him from being a Travelling Preacher till the ensuing Conference, or to remove him from the office of a Superintendent, or to depose him from the chair, and to elect another in his place.

1793.—Q. 30. Shall any alteration be made concerning the exercise of the office of a Chairman of a District?

A. 1. If any Preacher be accused of immorality, the Preacher accused, and his accuser, shall respectively choose two Preachers of their District; and the Chairman of the District shall, with the four Preachers chosen as above, try the accused Preacher; and they shall have authority, if he be found guilty, to suspend him till the ensuing Conference, if they judge it expedient.

2. If there be any difference between the Preachers in a District, the respective parties shall choose two Preachers; and the Chairman of the District, with the four Preachers so chosen, shall be final arbiters to determine the matters in dispute.

In both cases the Chairman shall have a casting voice, in case of an equality.

These regulations, also, have received an erroneous interpretation. Those persons who maintain that the "critical case" in the original law of the preceding year, was nothing but the trial of a Preacher, seem, after all, suspicious that something more may be meant; for when they come to argue on these succeeding enactments, they manifest a disposition to get rid of the original law altogether, and attempt to prove, that it is repealed by these more explicit regulations. The original law gave to the Superintendent the power of summoning the District-Committee; but the regulations of the succeeding year limited this power in the Superintendent to *particular* cases, and gave the power, in *general*, to the Chairman. The fact is, the original law did not direct the Chairman to be chosen, till they had actually met on the special business which they had to decide. The Meeting of the Committee could not, therefore, be called by the Chairman, when as yet there was not one: it must, necessarily, be summoned by some one else; and who so proper as the Superintendent himself, in whose Circuit the business was to be transacted? It was, however, soon found that some inconveniences attended this method; and the following Conference provided a remedy, by directing that, immediately after the Stations of the Preachers had been settled in the Conference, the Preachers of the Districts should assemble, and choose a Chairman who should remain in office the whole year. Having ordered this, then, as a matter of course, the Conference gave to the Chairman the right, in general, to convene the District-Committee, reserving to the Superintendent the power to summon it, should the Chairman neglect his duty, or otherwise misconduct himself. Now, how this regulation, which the legislators themselves, from their question, "What fur-

ther regulations" are necessary, &c.? evidently regarded as *additional* to the other, and by which they intended to give more efficiency to District-Committees, by having them ready organized for any particular emergency;—how this regulation, I say, repeals the whole of the original law respecting District-Committees, will not appear so clear to any but those who have so recently made the discovery. It is not, however, necessary to dwell longer on this point; for they themselves admit, that the second of the additional regulations of 1792 is to the same effect as the original law which they say is repealed. And so, by their own acknowledgment, their labour to do away with the law of 1791 is all in vain; for, themselves being the judges, there is in this following regulation a re-enactment of that law.

Were they to study well this rule, they might see that it is not only equivalent to the original law, but that it throws additional light upon it; for, in the first place, it prohibits the interference of the Chairman, individually, with *any Circuit* but his *own*. Something more, then, must be meant than the trial of a Preacher; for his interfering to *try a Preacher* is not, in correct language, interfering with *a Circuit* at all. Then, as the *other Circuits* and *his own* are placed in contrast, and he is prohibited interfering, individually, with *others*, but is left at liberty to do so with his *own*, the *interference* in both cases must be *the same*, or there is no contrast at all: but he could interfere with *all the officers and members* of his own Circuit; therefore it is *this interference* in other Circuits from which he is prohibited, *individually*. Further: as the Rule, while it prohibits the Chairman from interfering with any other Circuits, *individually*, authorizes him to do so *officially*, on any application of the Preachers or people, it necessarily follows, that he is empowered to *interfere, officially*, with any other Circuit, to the extent to which he can interfere with his own,—that is, with all its officers and members.

But it is said, that, although this regulation is equivalent to the original one of the preceding year, yet, because the Rules which are connected with it define the method by which a Preacher shall be tried, therefore this is the whole business which the District-Committee was appointed to transact. Now, providing they who assert this could have proved, that the original law of 1791 was repealed by the more explicit regulations of 1792 and 1793, and providing that these regulations had contained no general law equivalent to the one repealed, this might have been good argument; but they admit the fact, that the second of these is equivalent to the original one which they say is repealed. The question, then, is,—Must it necessarily follow, that this general rule which, when taken in its literal sense, unquestionably gives to the District-Committee the cognisance of all cases of difficulty which can occur in a Circuit, after all, means nothing more than to empower the Committee to try a Preacher, because it afterwards dwells more particularly on this, as one case which might occur? By the same kind of reasoning, the well-known

apostolic law, of doing "all" we do to the glory of God, might be proved to mean nothing else but that we are to "eat" and "drink" to His glory; for the Apostle makes mention particularly of these. It is true, if it had been proved that the Conference had no right of judicial interference with a Circuit, by any jurisdiction it might create, but could only judicially visit the Preachers, then it certainly could not have delegated any power beyond that to District-Committees; and we should thus have been compelled to admit the general law to be unintelligible, and that the more explicit Rules respecting the trial of a Preacher did really mark out the extent of this new jurisdiction. But I have proved the reverse,—that the Conference is the supreme authority, and, as such, is possessed of the right of providing for the maintenance of its *whole* discipline. This being the case, and bearing in mind, that the District-Committees were instituted to fill the place of Mr. Wesley, in the general superintendence of the whole Connexion, we are bound to admit the law, in its obvious and literal sense, as empowering District-Committees to correct all abuses whatever in the Circuits, which the Superintendents could not rectify. We have been taught to regard several of the leading Preachers of that day as eminently great men,—men of strong and well-disciplined minds; but if it were true, that the Conference had no power in a Circuit but to correct the Preachers, and that they never intended by their regulations to give any other power, save this, to the District-Committees, we should have to form a new estimate of their capacities. To have seen them labouring general rule after general rule, and culling the strongest and most sweeping expressions they could find, in order to tell us this one thing, that District-Committees were to try Preachers,—and, having gone through all this toil of composition, then setting anew to work, to tell us this one thing over again, in plain and unequivocal language,—would have led us to call even their common sense in question; for the integrity of the Conference at that period we are not allowed, as will be seen hereafter, to suspect.

But is it asked, "What, then, led the Conference to dwell more particularly on this one class of the cases which a District-Committee should settle?" When the Apostle, on laying down the general law of doing all to the glory of God, mentioned, particularly, the two acts of eating and drinking, he was led to do it by circumstances then existing in the Corinthian church. And there were circumstances among the *Preachers*, which induced the Conference to dwell more particularly on *their* trial, when giving to District-Committees the power of settling all extraordinary cases in the Connexion. The Deed of Declaration, as has been shown, had produced great jealousies among the Preachers; and many who were not of "the Hundred" were alarmed, lest the Conference should reduce them to a state of comparative inferiority and dependence. Mr. Wesley's letter had contributed to allay this feeling, but had not wholly effected this; and it was a display both of the wisdom and equity of the Conference, not to leave

the trial of *Preachers*, like the other cases, to the discretion of the Chairman of a District, lest partiality should be shown by him in favour of those of the Hundred ; but to lay down plain and explicit rules how all Preachers, whether of the Hundred or not, and even the Chairman himself, should be tried. These regulations were thus called for by particular circumstances ; and were admirably calculated to allay the fears of the excluded Preachers, and unite them to the Conference.

In that gross misinterpretation of the Rules respecting District-Committees, which I have exposed by placing those Rules in their true light, may be witnessed the effect of a first error. Those who thus err so egregiously respecting the design and power of District-Committees, are the same persons who adopt the principle, that the sole right of judicial interference with the local officers and members of Society had been secured by custom, during Mr. Wesley's life, to the local meetings, and that the Conference could not visit, judicially, any but its own members ; and, full of this view of the subject, they overlook, in a most surprising manner, those things in the Rules respecting District-Committees which are most palpable, and which one would have thought could scarcely have been misunderstood.

Thus far our attention has been directed chiefly to the District-Committees as *specially* intrusted with the maintenance of discipline in the Circuits, as well as among the Preachers ; but it will be proper briefly to notice the *ordinary* business, also, which they were appointed to transact.

The Conference of 1791, the same by which, as we have seen, District-Committees were first instituted, gives this direction, moreover, respecting them : " Let the District-Committees settle the temporal accounts of their respective Districts annually, either on the Saturday before the Conference, or at such time as is most convenient."

In the Conference of 1792 it was asked, " What can be done to contract the temporal business of the Conference ?" And to this question the following answer is given : " Let the Committees of the Districts settle all the temporal business of their Districts respectively, as far as possible ; and let the Chairman of each District lay the accounts in writing before the Conference."

In the Conference of 1793, the question was proposed, " What directions shall be given concerning the division of Circuits ?" and answered thus : " No division shall be made in a Circuit, where it does not appear to the District-Meeting, the Committee of Delegates, and the Conference, that there is such an enlargement of the work of God as requires it."

In the same Conference, the following directions were also given : " All matters relating to the building of preaching-houses and dwelling-houses shall be settled, in future, in the District-Meetings. All matters relating to the payment of the debts of houses, collections for

houses, and everything that appertains to preaching-houses and dwelling-houses, shall be considered and settled in the District-Meetings."

There are, in the Minutes of 1791, and of two or three succeeding years, some other regulations, directing the District-Meetings to choose each a Representative to form a Stationing-Committee at the Conference, and to determine what Preachers should attend the Conference; and all these regulations together show, First, That whether the District-Committees were called together on any extraordinary business or not, they were to hold an annual Meeting at the time most convenient for them to assemble; and, Secondly, That at their regular annual Meeting they were directed to investigate and digest all the temporal matters of their Districts, which had heretofore been brought to the Conference in a wholly unprepared state; and so shorten the labours of the Conference, by leaving to it little else to do, in those matters, than to review them and decide thereon.

We have now before us a full view of the institution of District-Committees. We see that the District-Committees, at their *Annual* Meeting, had, in addition to those matters which were more strictly pastoral, the temporal concerns of their respective Districts to transact; that they had to act as Committees of business, preparing the temporal affairs of the Connexion for the following Conference; and that the District-Committee was, moreover, specially appointed as an *extraordinary* tribunal, for the determining of all cases of emergency, in which the ordinary method of enforcing discipline should fail; and, in this character, assembling whenever cases of difficulty might arise requiring its interference.

We have now accomplished the first part of our task, and traced the constitution of Methodism from its origin to the important epoch of 1795. We have seen that Mr. Wesley did not reserve his power, wholly and absolutely, in his own hands so long as he lived; and then bequeath it at his death, altogether, as an entire whole, to the Conference: but that he, from the first, began to associate the Preachers with himself in the management of the Society;—that, in the very infancy of the Society, he united the Preachers with himself in legislating for it, and that from him, with the Preachers assembled in Conference, the Society received all its laws;—that the various institutions which sprung up, providentially as it were, in the course of his labours, were brought by him under the cognisance of the Conference, and were defined and established there, or afterwards laid aside, or modified, as the occasion required;—that the Society submitted to the government of Mr. Wesley and the Preachers associated with him, and became, in course of time, accustomed to look up to Mr. Wesley and the Preachers assembled in Conference, as the supreme authority;—and that the Deed of Declaration, which Mr. Wesley executed at the earnest desire of the Preachers themselves, by securing to the Conference its right of appointing to the chapels after Mr. Wesley's death,

did, in point of fact, confirm it in the possession of all its powers and prerogatives, as the supreme authority of the Connexion. We have seen that the ordinary administration, from the first, was vested in the Assistants, who could not be, constitutionally, controlled by the local meetings;—that the highest department in the executive was filled by Mr. Wesley, who exercised a general superintendence over the whole Connexion,—over the Preachers, local officers, and people, all of whom he could visit, judicially, as the necessity demanded; and that, at his death, the District-Committees were instituted to supply the lack of his general superintendence, and meet all such cases of emergency in the Circuits, as could not be dealt with in the ordinary administration of discipline. We now, therefore, turn our attention to,

II. THE CONSTITUTION OF METHODISM AS SETTLED BY THE REGULATIONS OF 1795 AND 1797.

As might be expected, those persons whose erroneous views of original Methodism have already been exposed, do not represent the Conference as laying down, in 1795 and 1797, power which originally and properly belonged to it; but as giving up power which it had unjustly claimed and exercised—as restoring to the local authorities their proper and original rights. But on this subject their statements are clashing and contradictory. While endeavouring to prove that the Conference of 1791, by the sweeping language which it uses, means nothing more than that the District-Committees should try Preachers, they find it helpful to their argument, to contend for the integrity and uprightness of the Conference—that it was not, by this general rule, plotting to seize the rights of the local jurisdictions. And yet, after maintaining that the Conference, so far from then taking any such step towards arbitrary power, had not even so much as an evil design, having lost sight for a moment of this, to them, perplexing subject,—the design and power of District-Committees,—they represent the Conference in 1795, only four short years afterwards, so completely transformed in its views, and principles, and conduct, that it had not only conceived the wish, and formed the plan, but had also so openly and manifestly executed its design of seizing on the rights of the local authorities, (and thus, as a matter of course, enslaving the people,) that universal dissatisfaction and commotion followed. They speak of the Conference as resigning, in that year, some of its usurped power; and as deeming it prudent, in 1797, to meet the loud demands of the people for further concessions, by giving up more. Now, in remarking upon these concessions, they do not describe the Conference as making them in the spirit of equity and repentance, but from motives of prudence, as though it were compelled by circumstances, rather than acting from principle. But the instant their attention is directed again to the power of District-Committees, they represent the same Conference of 1797, which had been compelled, by prudential motives,

to give up the rights which it had usurped, again so suddenly changed—once more so suddenly inspired with the spirit of uprightness which had influenced it in 1791, and so full of zeal for the people's good,—that it spontaneously enlarges the power of the President, and of the Chairmen of Districts, for the sole purpose of securing to the people, the concessions which it had made, by protecting them from those arbitrary Preachers who are imagined then to exist, and against whom the Conference is supposed to be as full of indignation, as of kindness and regard for the people! Such are the contradictions into which men fall when they commence their investigations on wrong principles.

We, however, who follow the light afforded by the history and official documents of Methodism, are under no necessity of representing the Conference as undergoing such sudden and unnatural transformations of character—of exhibiting it as a kind of moral chameleon. We have proved that the Conference was the supreme authority in original Methodism; and this position being adopted, all appears natural and consistent in the conduct of the Conference, and the Conference is not made to undergo any revolution of character or principles at all. The power which the Conference exercised before 1795 was not usurped, but legitimate; and when it laid part down, it was from motives which reflected upon it the highest honour, and gave it a stronger claim on the esteem of the Connexion.

That the Methodist body did experience some violent convulsions after Mr. Wesley's death, is painful matter of fact; but disputes on the part of the people with the Conference about power, were not the primary and leading cause. The sacramental question was the original cause of the disturbance; and disputes relative to the power of the Conference arose, in part, out of that controversy. During the latter part of Mr. Wesley's life, the Connexion began to be agitated on the subject of the Lord's Supper. A great part of the Societies could not have it in the Established Church, without receiving it from the hands of Ministers who were either of objectionable morals, or enemies to Methodism. There was also a very great number who had never, in any correct sense, been members of the Church of England at all,—who were gathered out of the world, and had been, almost entirely, regardless of religious ordinances; and many more who had been brought up in the principles of Dissent: and this large portion of the Societies were either without a relish for the National Church, or unable in conscience to attend its ordinances. The *greater* part, perhaps, of the Methodist body was, from one cause or other, almost entirely deprived of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

In process of time a feeling of dissatisfaction arose. It began to be wished that this Sacrament might be introduced into our own chapels. The feeling increased in extent and strength as the Societies were enlarged; and however it might be restrained by the veneration which was cherished for Mr. Wesley, it became evident to all reflecting persons,

that, as soon as he should be removed by death, the flame must break out. Such a state of things it was certain could never continue. The great and increasing portion of the body which was without the Sacrament, could never be expected to remain quiet ; and, a large number retaining their original prepossessions in favour of the Church, it was certain that a most serious collision must follow. What was expected took place. The Connexion became so violently agitated, that in 1792, only one year after Mr. Wesley's death, the Conference, driven to the greatest straits, resorted to the lot to determine, whether they should that year introduce the Lord's Supper, generally, or put it off at least another year. The result was, that it was delayed another year ; and a strong prohibition against its being administered in any of the Societies (except in London, where it had been administered for years) was issued. The following year, however, the Conference felt itself compelled to permit the introduction of the Sacrament, into those Societies which would not remain content without it ; and, in two Circular Addresses,* it forcibly describes the necessity which constrained it thus to act, and at the same time gives us to see, from what quarter the most powerful opposition was experienced, namely, from the Trustees. Many of the Trustees were opposed to the administration of the Lord's Supper in the chapels ; and at the Conference of 1794, a number of them assembled in Bristol, and delivered to the Conference an Address on the subject of the Sacrament, and on their situation as Trustees. The result of the negotiation was, that the Conference made some Regulations respecting the management of temporal matters—chiefly in reference to the chapels ; and imposed some additional restrictions on the administration of the Sacraments. All, however, would not do ; and the following year “ was a time of great uneasiness. The Trustees of that chapel in Bristol, which has been already mentioned as the first which Mr. Wesley built, were exceedingly averse to the ordinances being allowed to the Societies. They had laboured in this cause a considerable time, and seemed much dissatisfied that more liberal views should prevail. The Conference having, at their late sitting, granted to ninety-three places, the privilege of having the ordinances of God in that way which they desired, convinced those Trustees that their labour had hitherto been in vain ; and they determined on a more decisive opposition, and to risk all consequences rather than allow the liberty contended for.”† The step which they took was to exclude, on their own responsibility, the Preachers from the chapels. This, as might be expected, produced a still more violent agitation in the Connexion ; and the Conference was again looked forward to, with deep solicitude. At last it met, at Manchester, and a number of Trustees assembled at the same time. So serious was the aspect of affairs, that the Conference agreed to spend the whole of the first day in fasting, and prayer to God for direction.

* Minutes of Conference, 1793.

† Myles's Chron. Hist., p. 226.

It may be mentioned, as a proof of the tone of piety which, after all, prevailed, that several of the Trustees joined with the Preachers in these devotional exercises, and partook with them of the Lord's Supper at the close.

The official documents of this period sufficiently prove, that the parties immediately at issue were the Conference and the *Trustees*; and that the great cause of dispute was the administration of the Lord's Supper in our own chapels, and by our own Preachers. "The Delegates" were representatives, not of the people at large, or of the Leaders' or Quarterly Meetings, but of the *Trustees* merely; and the Plan of Pacification,* adopted in 1795, had for its express object to allay the ferment which prevailed in the Connexion, by laying down Rules which should so regulate the administration of the Sacraments, that those Societies should have the Lord's Supper which desired it, and those which did not should not have it forced upon them;—and to make provision that this method should be rigidly observed, by denouncing penalties against any, whether Preacher or local officer, who should dare to violate it.

In perfect unison with the Plan of Pacification are the "Addresses" of the "Delegates" with whom the Conference negotiated. As they will not occupy much room, I will insert them here.

ADDRESSES FROM THE DELEGATED TRUSTEES, ASSEMBLED AT MANCHESTER,
TO THE CONFERENCE.

RESOLVED, That the thanks of this Meeting be *unanimously* given to the President, and the members of the Conference, for their kind attention to the business of the Delegation of the Trustees that has been laid before them.

Resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Conference, signed by the President and Secretary.

*Committee-Room of Delegates,
August 4th, 1795.*

MATTHEW MAYER,
WILLIAM PINE.

TO THE METHODIST PREACHERS ASSEMBLED IN CONFERENCE.

DEAR AND HONOURED FATHERS AND BRETHREN,

We beg you to accept our sincere thanks, for your kind attention in sending us propositions for general pacification and discipline.

We are sensible of the liberality and candour which are manifest in them. It is evident from their tenor, that you have attempted to meet the views of each party. We hope and trust that, by the blessing of God, it may be a means of uniting the whole body of Methodists throughout the three kingdoms.

With all deference to the Conference, we submit the following propositions to their further attention:—

That some provision be made for the brethren who differ from the judgment of the Trustees, or the major part of a Society, on the subjects in question; as we suppose such cases are numerous and important: we particularly refer to Leeds Circuit.

That the case of those chapels where there are no Leaders, be more fully explained.

Also those where the Sacrament is administered every Sunday in the Parochial Church.

Although we think it our duty thus candidly to state the views which have

* For the Plan of Pacification at full length, see Appendix A.

occurred to us in carefully perusing the propositions, yet we think it necessary to say, we shall cheerfully acquiesce in the final determination of the Conference.

Signed, in behalf of the Meeting,

Manchester, August 3d, 1795.

MICHAEL LONGRIDGE.

On looking over the few things which the Delegates suggest to the Conference, as still, in their judgment, necessary to be settled, we find that they all relate to circumstances connected with the administration of the Sacraments. Not a hint is there of any other grievance. And the tone and spirit of the Addresses are not to be overlooked. In the language of respect in which they address the Conference, and in their cheerful acquiescence in its decision, we do not recognise the language and purposes of men treating with a body of tyrants, who had robbed them and the people of their legitimate and unquestionable rights, and who gave back the smallest modicum of their ill-gotten power with reluctance. Had they looked upon the Conference as some parties now speak of it; had they considered it as having claimed and exercised a power an authority over the Connexion, in general, which did not belong to it; had they regarded the Conference as having had left, only four years before, a limited jurisdiction, with no other legitimate power than the right to control its own members, to appoint Preachers to the chapels, and to take part in a few temporal arrangements; and that all other power which it had exercised was snatched from the local authorities;—had these been the views of the “Delegates,” we should have had grievances of a very different kind more than hinted at; and we should have found them taking much higher ground, and adopting a tone very different from that cheerful submissiveness to the Conference which pervades their Addresses. And, under such circumstances, this they might have done without any violation of Christian principle, or indulging, in the slightest degree, in un-Christian bitterness. A candid statement of their grievances, and a firm demanding of their rights, would then have been becoming.

We have thus obtained sufficient evidence that, up to the close of 1795, the great subject of dispute, and the leading cause of all the commotions in the Connexion, was the administration of the Sacraments in our own chapels and by our own Preachers. Had those persons who are now heard uttering the language of complaint examined well the Plan of Pacification, and the other official documents of that period, they must have reached the same conclusion which I have thus established; and they would have never committed themselves as they have done, by asserting that the great, and (for anything they say) the only, cause of the disputes from the time of Mr. Wesley's death, was the power which the Conference claimed and exercised. Another good effect would have resulted from their careful study of the Plan of Pacification: it would have contributed, greatly, to preserve them from the gross mistake into which they fall respecting the Minutes of 1797, on the subject of District-Committees. With the Plan of Pacification before them, they could not have concluded, that

the object of the Conference in strengthening District-Committees was to try Preachers. They must have seen that that Plan puts the Preachers so fully into the hands of the people, when the Trustees, or the Stewards and Leaders choose to interfere in the cases specified, that certainly nothing more could have been necessary to bring an offending Preacher to justice, even if no other concessions of power had been made by the Conference, than what was granted by the Plan itself.

To proceed. From this time, however, the *power* of the Conference began to be assailed. The historian of Methodism says, "The Plan of Pacification had satisfied all moderate people ;"* but that was an age in which "moderate people" did not superabound. During the period of those disputes, respecting the administration of the Sacraments, by which the Methodist Society was agitated, the French revolution was raging in its fury, and threatening not only to lay the thrones of Europe prostrate in the dust, but to dissolve the whole frame-work of society itself. In England, the spirit of uprooting reform raged like a fury through the land. Paine was then promulgating his levelling doctrines. The elegant historian of "the Reign of George the Third," speaking of the second part of Paine's pestiferous work, says, "It directed his votaries to pull down every establishment, and level all distinctions, in order to enjoy the rights of man: by far the greater number of the lower ranks, and a considerable portion of the middling classes, were infected with the revolutionary fever which operated in the wildest and most extravagant ravings. Thomas Paine was represented as the minister of God dispensing light to a darkened world: the most industrious and useful classes of the state were seized with a furious desire of abandoning their own course of beneficial and productive labour, and taking the management of public affairs into their own hands. All the levelling notions of John Ball, John Cade, and the fifth-monarchy men, appeared to revive with an immense addition of new extravagance." The demagogues of the day, directing the attention of their disciples to the Established Church, taught them that "the hierarchy was equally the bane of Christianity, and rational liberty," and indulged in sanguine hopes "that the downfall of our establishments was approaching."†

It would have been surprising if the Methodist body had kept wholly free from this contagion. There was a party in the Connexion which had imbibed notions of a liberty which Methodism certainly did not afford. Some, at least, of the principal leaders of this party were young men, who had arisen upon the stage of action, and formed their opinions, in that state of things which the French revolution introduced. They did not enter into Mr. Wesley's views of Methodism as intended, by Divine Providence, to effect a revival of religion in the Church of England, and that, in order to effect this, it was

* Myles's Chron. Hist., p. 235.

† Bisset's Reign of George the Third, 1st edit., 8vo., vol. v., pp. 227, 241.

necessary to keep as closely attached to the Establishment as possible ; and they could not endure the restraints which the Conference persisted in imposing with respect to the administration of the Sacraments. They exclaimed against those restrictions, as an infringement on their Christian liberty,—forgetting that others, who had different views, had rights as well as they ; and that it would have been as great a violation of the rights of those Societies that wished to receive the Lord's Supper in the Established Church, to impose on them the Sacrament, as it would have been to withhold it from themselves. The middle plan of granting it under such restrictions that none should receive the Lord's Supper in their own chapels but those who wanted it, did not at all suit men of such a temperament ; and the Plan of Pacification, in 1795, having finally settled the long and keenly-disputed question on this basis, their displeasure was then directed against the Conference. They loudly declaimed against it, not as though it exercised a power which did not belong to it : they admitted that the Conference was, and ought to be, the supreme power ; but they quarrelled with its *constitution*. Nor did they object to that, as though there had been any departure from the original plan : they well knew that, as the “ Deed of Declaration ” shows, the Conference had always been thus constituted—that none but those who were in the office of the ministry, whether Ministers of the Establishment, or regular Preachers, had ever been members of it. They urged the introduction of Lay-Delegates merely on the ground of expediency and fitness. Inspired with a portion of that enthusiasm, respecting the rights of the people, which had then so generally seized the nation, they contended, that the people ought to be introduced by their representatives into the Conference, and to have a share in making their own laws. Aware that they could not effect such a revolution as they wished, they separated, and formed a plan of church-government suited to their taste ; and that very plan of this the *most* liberal party in Methodism furnishes, as we have before seen, the irrefragable proof that their objection was not so much to the *power* of the Conference, as to its *constitution*. They, as wise men, saw that in every body politic there must be a head—a supreme authority ; and they constituted *their* Conference also the supreme power : only, instead of composing it, as the Methodist Conference had ever been composed, of Preachers exclusively, they associated, with the Preachers, the Delegates of the people. Now if this body of separatists had had such views of the Methodist constitution as some at present entertain ; if they had been contending for the independence of Leaders' and Quarterly Meetings, in all local affairs, and that the Conference had been exercising an usurped power over the body—a power which had not been secured to it by established usage ; would they immediately, when they had thrown off this tyranny, and when sitting down in freedom to frame a constitution to their taste, have done the very thing they complained of, and on account of which they separated, and have given to *their* Conference this very power—have constituted it their supreme

authority, and made all their other jurisdictions of Leaders'-Meetings, Quarterly-Meetings, &c., subordinate to it? Let those adopt such a conclusion who can!

Mr. Kilham's connexion with the Conference terminated in 1796. But so great was the activity with which the views he had adopted were disseminated, and such was the prevailing taste of that day for every thing that bore the name of reform, that the Methodist Society was thrown into a greater state of commotion than ever. This being the state of things, the Conference of 1797 came to the resolution of modifying the exercise of its authority as far as it possibly could, consistently with a due regard for the sacred trust which was reposed in its hands; and, after an amicable intercourse with a number of friends who had assembled at the time of its sitting, the Conference made the concessions to which our attention has now to be directed. In making those concessions, however, the Conference is not to be regarded as giving up, from prudential motives *merely*, power which did not belong to it; but as relinquishing, in the spirit of noble sacrifice, as well as from prudence, power which was, originally and legitimately, its own.

One of the first results of a careful examination of the concessions of 1797 is the establishment of the fact, that the Conference did not give up the supreme power—the power of making laws. Indeed, it was not asked to do so. The Methodists of that day—even those who were the most liberal in their sentiments—who had caught the most of that enthusiastic spirit in favour of liberty which then pervaded, not only this country, but most of Europe,—were, after all, too good politicians ever to dream of such an anomalous and contradictory thing, as some persons now contend for—a body without a head. They knew that in every body politic there must be supreme power; and they never thought of taking it away from the Conference, where it had ever been, and bestowing it elsewhere. The utmost that they proposed was, that the Conference should receive into its number Representatives or Delegates of the people, who should share with the Preachers in the exercise of this supreme power. But this, also, the Conference felt bound to refuse; and thus recorded, among the “Sundry Miscellaneous Regulations” published with its concessions, its sentiments on the proposal:—

The Conference, having maturely considered the subject, are thoroughly persuaded, with many of our Societies whose letters have been read in full Conference, that they cannot admit any but regular Travelling Preachers into their body, either in the Conference or in District-Meetings, and preserve the system of Methodism entire, particularly the Itinerant plan, which they are determined to support.*

On this refusal of the Conference, two things are observable: First, it was not dictated by lust of power. The principle on which the Preachers assembled on that occasion acted was, to meet the wishes of

* Minutes of Conference, 8vo., vol. i., p. 379.

the people as far as they possibly could, without violating the pastoral trust reposed in them as Christ's Ministers; and they felt they could not introduce laymen into their own body, or into the District-Meetings, consistently with a due regard to the purity of their doctrines and ministry, the preservation of itinerancy, and the real welfare and religious liberty of the people at large.

It is to be noticed, in the second place, that in this view of the subject the Conference did not stand alone. It was not the whole of the Connexion which was asking for the admission of Lay-Delegates into the Conference. Many of the Societies took the same view of the question as the Conference itself. In the midst of the popular outcry for civil and religious liberty, they had the wisdom to suspect, that the interests of the people were not always most secure in the hands of those who made the loudest professions of regard for liberty. And they felt it to be what they owed to themselves, to the cause of God, and to the Conference, to avow, in such a crisis, what were their sentiments; and to support the Conference by the assurances of their attachment to it, and the declaration of their conviction, that Methodism, as a whole, and their own Methodist rights and privileges, were safer in the hand of the Conference, constituted as it then was, than they would be if Lay-Delegates should obtain a place either in the Conference or in District-Meetings. It is to the addresses of these Societies that the Conference refers, in the preceding extract from its Minutes. What important concessions, on the subject of the admission of lay-brethren into District-Meetings, the Conference, without being solicited, has made in late years, will be noticed afterwards.

It is not, however, merely from its recorded objection to receive Lay-Delegates into its own body, that we are left to infer that the Conference remained, notwithstanding its concessions, in the possession of supreme power. There is, in the concessions themselves, an express recognition of the Conference as the supreme authority. The "supreme power" is, as we have seen, the power of making laws; and the right of the Conference to make laws is explicitly recognised in the concessions of 1797, and confirmed by them. At a time when the Conference is viewed by some parties with such suspicion, it is well that there are means of proving that this recognition was not surreptitiously introduced by the Conference, and overlooked by the Delegates, but that it was seriously considered and well understood; and, more than this, that it was drawn up by the Delegates themselves, and merely adopted by the Conference,—the very language of the Delegates being preserved almost throughout. There are, still extant, copies of the Minutes of this Committee of laymen who negotiated with the Conference, which show this to have been the case. The following is a copy of one of the day's proceedings:—

On Saturday, August 5th, 1797,

RESOLVED,—That the Committee of this Meeting do confer with the Preachers' Committee on the following subjects; namely,—

1. The answer of the Conference with respect to the *Bristol* case.

2. How far the Preachers will agree, that when the Conference shall make any *new Rule* for the Societies at large, provided the Travelling Preachers find, at the first Quarterly-Meeting, that the major part of that Meeting, in conjunction with the Preachers, are of opinion that the enforcing of such Rule in that Circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that Circuit, it shall not be enforced, in opposition to the judgment of a Quarterly-Meeting, till after a second Conference.

3. How far the Conference will agree to submit any new Rule that they wish to make for the Connexion to the sanction of any Meeting of Trustees, Stewards, &c., sent to places where the Conference shall be held in future.

A plan for some regulations in the *executive* government of the Methodist Societies was, by order of this Meeting, recommended to the consideration of the Conference.

The recognition of the Conference as the supreme authority thus emanated from the Lay-Committee. The Conference refusing to share the legislation with the people, by receiving their Representatives into its own body, the Delegates then proposed two other plans; one of which, we see, was, that the Conference should refer new laws to a Lay-Committee, which should sit at the same place and time with the Conference; the other, that the different Quarterly-Meetings should consider a new law, and, if they should see fit, should suspend its operation in their respective Circuits till the following Conference. Had the Conference agreed to the plan in paragraph "3," it would as really have shared the legislative power with the people, as though Lay-Delegates had been incorporated with itself. The Lay-Committee would have been, to all intents and purposes, a second branch of the legislature. To the plan marked "2," the Conference could have no objection; because it left the legislative power, whole and entire, where it had ever been—in the Conference; and only provided for the *trial* of a new law, before it should be made absolute and imperative on the whole Connexion. It is especially to be remarked, that the Delegates did not propose that if, at the following Conference, it should appear that any given number of Circuits—say a majority—had rejected a new law, the Conference should not in such case confirm it. This would have been, in effect, to ask again for what they had sought to obtain by the two other plans. It would have been to ask for a prerogative even more objectionable, perhaps, simply considered in a practical point of view, than a share in the legislation. Quarterly-Meetings would then have been invested with a power similar to the formidable tribunitian power of the Romans, which might have proved most pernicious in its exercise. The Conference would have had the *onus* of making laws for the body; and after it had, with the greatest care and solicitude, devised a law to meet any of those emergencies which will frequently occur in every body politic, it might have happened that a majority of the Quarterly-Meetings, by their hasty *veto*, would have rendered all its deliberation void, and have left the emergency unprovided for. And this, it is evident, might have been frequently the case. The evil against which a new law provides is often far from being universal. It is frequently con-

fined to a comparatively small number of Circuits. Now, in such instances, the Quarterly-Meetings in the greater number of Circuits where the grievance had not been felt, considering, as the Minute directs, their respective Circuits only, might naturally enough conclude, "Our circumstances do not require any such law, and it will impose an additional burden upon us: we will therefore reject it." And thus all the deliberation and care of the Conference, looking with a paternal eye on the Connexion at large, and devising laws which, although inconvenient in some respects, perhaps, to many Circuits, would be found highly conducive to the welfare of the whole body,—would be completely defeated.

The Delegates did not, however, as we see by their own Minutes, ask for the Quarterly-Meetings to have such a dangerous power intrusted to them—to be placed in such circumstances of temptation. That which they asked was, that the Conference would allow the Quarterly-Meetings to suspend, if they saw fit, the operation of a new law in their respective Circuits until the *second* Conference; trusting in the wisdom and paternal affection of the Conference, that, if it perceived, from the objections of the Circuits, that the law was not calculated to answer the end proposed, it would not confirm it. But the Conference was to be left at liberty to render the law absolute and imperative on the whole Connexion, should it find the objections of the Circuits to be of little weight; and should it still see reason to conclude, that the law, on the whole, would be beneficial, and meet the emergency for which it was provided. This Regulation, which thus sufficiently secures the people against "precipitation" on the part of the Conference, in making laws, leaves, at the same time, the legislative power whole and entire in the Conference.*

* To enable the reader to compare the proposal made by the Delegates with the language used by the Conference in adopting it, without the trouble of further reference, the Rule of the Conference, as contained in the Address of the Conference to the Societies, dated August 7th, 1797, is here given:—

"VII. In respect to all new Rules, which shall be made by the Conference,

"It is determined, that if at any time the Conference see it necessary to make any new Rule for the Societies at large, and such Rule should be objected to at the first Quarterly-Meeting in any given Circuit; and if the major part of that Meeting, in conjunction with the Preachers, be of opinion, that the enforcing of such Rule in that Circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that Circuit; it shall not be enforced in opposition to the judgment of such Quarterly-Meeting before the second Conference. But if the Rule be confirmed by the second Conference, it shall be binding to the whole Connexion. Nevertheless, the Quarterly-Meetings, rejecting a new Rule, shall not, by publications, public Meetings, or otherwise, make that Rule a cause of contention, but shall strive, by every means, to preserve the peace of the Connexion."

On this Regulation the Conference thus comments, in a subsequent part of the same Address:—

"(6.) In order to prevent any degree of precipitation in making new Rules, and to obtain information of the sentiments of our people on every such Rule, we have agreed to the article mentioned under the 7th head, by which no Regulations will be finally confirmed, till after a year's consideration, and the knowledge of the sentiments of the Connexion at large, through the medium of all their public officers." (See the Address, in Appendix B, at the end of this Essay.)

It is to be regarded as a happy circumstance, that the Conference had the proposal made to it by the Lay-Committee,—that it should not make its laws binding on the whole Connexion till another sitting, unless, however, they should be adopted, at once, by the tacit consent of all the Quarterly-Meetings; because this proposal led to an express recognition of the Conference as the supreme power, in those concessions which are regarded as introducing a new era in Methodism. Had not this proposal been made, in all probability there would have been no such direct recognition of the legislative power of the Conference at all; and it might have become a matter of serious dispute with those who cannot see anything that is not couched in express terms, whether the Conference was really left in possession of that power or not. And it is another circumstance of importance, that the Lay-Delegates should have published to the world the Minutes of their proceedings and negotiations with the Conference; and thus have furnished the incontrovertible proof, that this Rule, which recognises the legislative power of the Conference, was not a stratagem of the Conference, but that it was offered by the Delegates themselves, and merely agreed to by the Conference, the very words of the Delegates being preserved almost throughout.

The Conference was thus left in possession of *legislative* power, although it made the important concession that that power should, for the future, be exercised with due regard to the views of the people, as ascertained according to the plan submitted by the Delegates. What other concessions were made by the Conference of 1797? The Lay-Committee, as we have seen, say, in their Minutes, that “a plan for some Regulations in the *executive* government was recommended to the consideration of the Conference;” and the Conference itself, in summing up or commenting on its own concessions, says, “We have given up the greatest part of our *executive* government into your hands.” What was given up, may be ranged under two general heads:—

- I. Concessions in regard to *financial* and other *temporal* matters;
- II. Concessions in respect to *discipline*.

I. In the first class we see the Conference taking business from the District-Meetings, and giving it to the Quarterly-Meetings.

The *Yearly Collection* formerly was all brought to the Conference, and the Conference divided it among the Preachers who had not received, from their respective Circuits, what was their due. But with this distribution the Circuits had little or nothing to do. The Preachers laid before the Conference their bills: the Conference paid the money; and published nothing but a general statement. To show how little the people were made acquainted with this business, I will give from the Minutes of 1790, the last Conference which Mr. Wesley attended, the account given of the Yearly Collection for that year.—

Question. What is contributed for the yearly expenses?

Answer. £1,225. 15s. 10d.

Question. How was it expended?

Answer. As follows:—

	£	s.	d
Last Year's Deficiencies	52	13	11
Present Year's Contingencies	100	0	0
Law.....	72	3	0
Ireland.....	248	18	0
Scotland	200	0	0
Wales, Isles of Guernsey, &c.	78	0	0
In all England.....	473	4	11
	1,224	19	10

After Mr. Wesley's death, and the District-Committees had been instituted, this was a part of the business these Committees were directed to transact. The District-Meetings examined the claims of the Preachers, and drew up a plan for distributing the money, which was laid before the Conference for confirmation. With this method of transacting the business, the people had become dissatisfied. They could not tell whether the claims of the Preachers were correct or not. The Preachers gave their own account of the sums which their Circuits had failed to pay them; and the Circuits had nothing but the integrity of the Preachers as the pledge that none but fair statements were given, and none but just claims made. But, by Regulation I.,* the business of preparing bills for deficiencies was transferred to the Quarterly-Meetings. It directs that the Quarterly-Meetings of those Circuits which cannot pay their Preachers the whole of their salaries, shall see that the bills for deficiencies to be presented to the Conference are correct, and signed by the Circuit-Steward. Thus prepared, they are to go through the District-Meeting to Conference. And the Conference proposes, for the time to come, to publish a minute and particular account of what every Circuit raises towards the Yearly Collection, and of what is paid for deficiencies in every Circuit; that thus every Circuit, by comparing the Conference-account with its own, may have evidence that there has been no collusion among the Preachers, whether in the District-Meetings or the Conference, but that all has been transacted with uprightness.

By Regulation II.,† the Quarterly-Meetings are allowed to have a voice in the *division of Circuits*. In former times, the Conference divided Circuits as it saw fit; and after the District-Committees were established, this was another part of the business they were appointed to prepare for the Conference. The Preachers, when assembled at their annual District-Meetings, digested plans for such divisions as they thought necessary; which, with all their other transactions, were laid before the Conference for confirmation. In all this, the Circuits had nothing to do. Although the Preachers might consult any of the principal friends on such proposed divisions, neither the friends individually, nor the Quarterly-Meetings, had any constitutional right to

* See Appendix B.

† See Appendix B.

interfere, to prevent any division; nor was their sanction necessary to render it valid. The Regulation in question, however, takes the arrangement of this business from the District-Meeting, and gives it to the Quarterly-Meetings. The plan for dividing a Circuit is now to be agreed on at the Quarterly-Meeting, and signed by the Circuit-Steward, before it can come into the District-Meeting at all; and the District-Meeting has now nothing more to do in the business than to approve of, or reject, the plan proposed, or to refer it back to the Quarterly-Meeting for revision.

The same Regulation provides, that *all other temporal* business shall first be prepared at the Quarterly-Meetings; and "their approbation given, signed by the Circuit-Stewards," is made necessary to its being introduced into District-Meetings.

An important change was thus effected by the first two Regulations. All the temporal matters which the District-Committees used to prepare for the Conference, were transferred to the Quarterly-Meetings. The Quarterly-Meetings were, thenceforward, to prepare those matters for the Conference; and the District-Meetings were only on those questions to give their consent or reject the measure. The *District-Committees*, acting as *Committees of business*, had nothing left them on those questions "*but a negative.*"* It is, of course, to be understood, that the District-Meeting remained at liberty, while negating any measure, to give such recommendation to the Quarterly-Meeting as it might deem fit.†

II. The second class of concessions relates to *discipline*.

By Regulation III.,‡ a right is given to the Leaders'-Meeting to prevent the Superintendent from *introducing persons into Society*, whom the Meeting judges to be unfit for admission. The Superintendent, formerly, might ask the opinion of the Leaders on those matters; but they could do no more than *advise*. By this Rule, however, they can *restrain* the Superintendent. He must admit none who are formally objected to by the Leaders.

By the same Regulation, it is provided, that the Superintendent's power of *expelling from Society* should also be laid under restrictions. The Superintendent, up to this period, could expel any person from Society, whom he might judge unfit for membership. The Leader had no constitutional power to oppose him in the exercise of this authority. Now, however, the Superintendent cannot put a person out of Society, till his offence be proved. This Rule certainly admits of two interpretations; but I adopt the more liberal one. I understand it to say, that *all* offences with which an individual may be charged are to

* See Appendix B, 2.

† Since 1797, the principle involved in these concessions on financial matters has been still further extended, by placing the management of the *Public Funds* of the Connexion in the hands of mixed Committees of Preachers and laymen. (See especially on this subject the "Special Address" of 1835, in Appendix D.)

‡ See Appendix B.

be proved, not only in the presence of the Leaders, but to their *satisfaction* also.* But this the more liberal construction of the Rule, makes the Leaders to be no more than the jury, whose business it is to decide upon the *fact*. It does not empower them to determine what the *sentence* shall be, in case they bring in a verdict declaring the fact to have been proved: that is left to the Preacher. He, as judge, must award the punishment.

By Regulation IV.,† an important alteration is made in the manner of *appointing and removing Leaders and Stewards*. Previously, the Superintendent had managed this business without any control. He could appoint a Leader or Steward, or displace either, as he saw fit. This power, however, is now put under restrictions. The Superintendent cannot now either appoint or remove Leaders and Stewards, but in conjunction with the Leaders'-Meeting. The same Rule extends also to the *admission*, but not to the *expulsion*, of *Local Preachers*.

In all these concessions which relate to discipline and general management, there is one thing especially observable. The Superintendent's authority is not shared with the local meetings. They are not constituted judges along with the Superintendent. The Rules do not make the *Meetings* responsible for the enforcement of discipline. Every one of the Regulations says, the *Superintendent* is to receive or expel, to appoint or remove, as he ever did, only now with this limitation,—that he must have the concurrence of the Meeting. The Conference does, therefore, in its own comment on these Rules, speak most correctly when it says, “Our Societies have now a full *check* on the Superintendent.”‡ The Superintendent's power is not taken from him, but he is thus *checked* in its exercise.

We have now a full view of the concessions of power which the Conference made to the people, in the memorable year of 1797; and find, that what the Conference conceded with regard to *legislative* power was not the power itself, but its absolute exercise; and that its concessions relating to the *executive* government,—the *administration* of Methodism,—had respect to its *ordinary* administration only. We have before seen that, from the beginning, there has been in Methodism an *ordinary* and an *extraordinary* administration; that, during Mr. Wesley's life, the *ordinary* administration was vested in the Assistants and Preachers, and the *extraordinary* in Mr. Wesley; and that, on his death, the *District-Committee* was instituted to supply his place, as an *extraordinary* jurisdiction to enforce discipline, in all cases

* The “Form of Discipline,” published by the Conference of 1797, (described in a subsequent note, page 55,) which I had not seen before I published my Essay, confirms this interpretation. The Rule relating to expulsions is thus put in that publication:—

“4. As to the exclusion of members from the Society, the far greater number exclude themselves by utterly forsaking us. But with respect to others, let the Rules of the Society be carefully attended to, and the Leaders be consulted on such occasions, and the crime proved to their satisfaction.” (Page 13.)

† See Appendix B.

‡ See Appendix B, 3.

of emergency where *ordinary* means should fail. Now there is nothing in the concessions which so much as glances at District-Committees, in their *principal* and *leading* character, as possessing an *extraordinary* jurisdiction over the *whole* Connexion. The power taken from District-Committees is power they had exercised in their *secondary* character, as *Committees of business*. It is in express reference to *temporal* matters, and to *temporal only*, that the Conference says, "Nothing is left to them but a negative;" and although this expression is repeated by the Conference, towards the close of its Address, in connexion with the plan of trying Preachers, as modified in 1795, yet it can only refer in truth to temporal matters. No one will say, that the District-Committee has nothing but "a bare negative" in the trial of a Preacher. On this great question, as to what power was taken from District-Committees, everything is clear and explicit. All that is said of power taken, by these concessions, from District-Committees, refers to them only as Committees of business. Not a single expression can be made to apply to them in their principal character. What rule, then, I ask, will any one produce to prove, that when the Conference says, it takes away the power of District-Committees under *one* of the characters they sustain, it, therefore, takes away their power under *both* their characters? It would be no common rule which would prove such a point. By all the acknowledged principles of interpretation it will be concluded,—that as the Conference did not take away from District-Committees their *extraordinary* jurisdiction, they remained possessed of *that*, when stripped of their power as *Committees of business*.

This sound conclusion is confirmed by the following considerations. The opposite conclusion would involve the absurdity, that the Conference, in conceding one point, did, in fact, give up two. The Conference conceded—that hereafter Methodism, in its discipline, should be administered in the one way which it marks out in its Address; but if it gave up the extraordinary power of District-Committees, it did really concede this point also,—that Methodism should be administered in any way the Circuits should choose. For if it has no power left to interfere by this extraordinary jurisdiction, why then the Circuits may abide by this one way, or adopt any other; there being no power left to prevent it. But, adopting the only just interpretation of the Rules, we are saved from this absurdity. All appears consistent. The Conference agrees that Methodism shall be administered in this one way; but, by leaving to District-Committees their extraordinary jurisdiction, it reserves to itself the power to step in, when necessary, and do that which Circuits may refuse to do according to the plan then agreed upon, for the ordinary administration of discipline.

To adopt the opposite conclusion would be attended with this result also,—that the Conference has, in reality, given up the supreme power, which is so clearly recognised by the same concessions. It is, as has before been shown, a universal principle in politics,—and it may be added, that it is a common-sense principle, too,—that wherever there

is the power to make laws, there is also the power to enforce them. However explicitly, then, the Conference has marked out the *ordinary* administration, it must necessarily, as the supreme authority, have the inherent right to interfere in an *extraordinary* manner, to prevent any abuse of the *ordinary* plan, or departure from it. To advert, for the sake of illustration, to the *civil* constitution under which we live,—it might as well be said, that, because the *ordinary* administration of justice is settled, therefore the Government cannot interfere in *extraordinary* emergencies. I adopt this comparison the more readily, because it is the favourite argument of certain parties, that they might as well give up their constitutional right to be tried by jury, as to give up their right to be tried by their Leaders'-Meetings. They say, it is their right to be tried by jury, and the Government cannot deprive them of that right. Very good ; but has not the Government power to interfere to prevent any abuse of this important privilege ? If a jury should happen to be empannelled among whom were accomplices of the prisoner, or those who had a strong bias on any account in his favour, is there no alternative ? Must the ends of justice be defeated through the corruptness of the jury ? One cannot but admire the numerous provisions of our constitution, for preventing any abuse of the important privilege of trial by jury. In the first place, the jurors are not selected from the immediate neighbourhood where the prisoner has resided, but from all parts of the county at large. The probability, therefore, is, that a jury thus constituted will be found, not only free from prejudice either for or against the prisoner, but even without any previous knowledge of him at all. This, however, is not regarded as a sufficient security that justice will be administered. The law contemplates the possibility that the Sheriff or Returning Officer may, through oversight or other cause, empanel a prejudiced jury ; and provision is therefore made that it may be set aside. Not only the prisoner himself may object to any or all of the jury, but the law provides for challenges to be made, on the part of the Crown, to any of the jurors, or to the whole array. Every suspicious individual of the jury can thus be rejected before the trial is proceeded with. With such provisions as these, the Executive will not be often foiled in the just administration of the laws. It will generally be able to prevent the important privilege of trial by jury from being abused. Emergencies, however, will occur, when its powers will require to be increased ; and one of those emergencies is fresh in our recollection. It is not long since,* when Manchester and its vicinity were infected with the spirit of dissatisfaction and rebellion, the Legislature interposed, and, by the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, armed the Executive with an extraordinary and most formidable power. When this great bulwark of our liberty was thus thrown down, a person, on mere suspicion of hostility to the Government, might have been

* This was written in 1828.

arrested, and thrown into prison, and left there without being brought to his trial at all. And this, it is known, is not the *dernier* resort. The supreme Executive has the power, without applying immediately to the Legislature, to place a rebellious district under law of an altogether different kind; and to administer justice by tribunals totally different from civil courts. From this brief view it is evident, that, although, in our civil constitution, the *ordinary* administration of the laws is settled, and it is the undoubted privilege of Englishmen to be tried by jury, yet the Government possesses the inherent right to interfere, in an *extraordinary* manner, for the maintenance of its own authority, and for the due administration of justice. On the same principle, then, I maintain, that although the Conference, by its concessions in 1797, marked out the method by which discipline should be thenceforward *ordinarily* administered, it did not, necessarily, by doing this, give up the District-Committee in its principal and leading character; because it still possessed, as the supreme authority, the inherent right of interference in *extraordinary* cases, to prevent an abuse of the privileges which it conceded, and to secure the just administration of its laws.

We might thus have reached a satisfactory conclusion on the subject, providing that we had nothing from which to argue, save the Address to the Societies, which the Conference of 1797 issued during its sittings; but, surely, every shadow of doubt ought to be removed by the "Miscellaneous Regulations" with respect to Districts, found, in connexion with that Address, in the Minutes of Conference for that year. It is matter of just surprise how any persons can read these Regulations, and not see that the Conference has reserved to itself the right of entering a Circuit by means of its District-Committees, whenever such an interference becomes necessary, for the maintenance of its discipline. In these Regulations we hear the Conference say, in effect, to the local meetings: "We concede to you all the foregoing important privileges; take them and *use* them, and we will never interfere to disturb you; but we reserve to ourselves the power of stepping in, when necessary, to prevent their *abuse*."

In the Regulation which stands the second in order,* we have an evident recognition and formal confirmation of the *extraordinary* jurisdiction of District-Committees. The Chairman, in conjunction with the Preachers of the District, is made responsible for the "execution of the laws" in his District. There are some persons who would make it appear, that all the authority left to District-Committees is, simply to try and remove a Preacher; but how they can conclude so, in the face of this Rule, is surprising enough. What, has the Methodist Code no laws but for Preachers? Can there be no offenders but Preachers? Unless this be proved, something more than the one

* "2. The Chairman of each District, in conjunction with his brethren of the Committee, shall be responsible to the Conference for the execution of the Laws, so far as his District is concerned." (See Appendix B.)

simple business of punishing a Preacher must be contemplated here. "The laws" cannot be understood to mean anything less than "the laws" of Methodism in general; and the only fair conclusion respecting the Rule is, that the Chairman, with the Committee, is responsible for the execution of all the laws respecting the people, as well as the Preachers. The Chairman and the Committee, then, of course, must have a right to visit any and every Circuit in their District, where an extraordinary emergency occurs, and apply a suitable remedy. How can there be responsibility where there is not a commensurate power? If they are responsible for the administration of "the laws" throughout the whole District, the whole District must necessarily be so placed under their control, that, when *ordinary* means fail, they may step in and put the machine again in motion.

Having thus recognised, and formally confirmed, the *extraordinary* power of District-Committees, the Conference then proceeds to strengthen them by the addition of other Preachers, for the effectual exercise of this power. The Rule, which is the third in order, supposes that such cases of difficulty might occur, where the District was comparatively small, or where there was a paucity of Preachers of standing and experience, as to make it desirable to strengthen the District-Committee, by the addition of other competent Preachers from neighbouring Districts; and the Chairman—in "order that he might not have cause to complain of want of power" to deal with such cases of special importance and perplexity—is therefore empowered "to summon three of the nearest Superintendents, to be incorporated with the District-Committee, who shall have equal authority to vote, and settle everything until the Conference."* This Regulation is thus to be regarded as a provision for *strengthening* the District-Committee, whenever the Chairman is of opinion that foreign assistance is desirable, to enable the Committee to settle a case of more than ordinary intricacy, in the most satisfactory manner. Now if we are not to understand the Conference as saying, that its design in this provision is to give greater efficiency to the District-Committee as an *extraordinary* jurisdiction, extending over the *whole* Connexion, its language is incapable of interpretation. It will not be said, that the object of the Conference was to strengthen District-Committees for transacting *temporal* affairs. Having nothing left to them, on these subjects, but "a bare negative," they could not need thus to be enlarged, for the mere purpose of enabling them to say, "No."†

* "3. That no Chairman may have cause to complain of the want of power, in cases which (according to his judgment) cannot be settled in the ordinary District-Meeting, he shall have authority to summon three of the nearest Superintendents, to be incorporated with the District-Committee, who shall have equal authority to vote, and settle everything till the Conference." (See Appendix B.)

† The Regulation of 1797, providing for the strengthening of a District-Committee by the addition of three Superintendents from other Districts, was amplified by the Conference of 1835, which resolved that, instead of *three* of the nearest Superintendents, "*four* Superintendents, or *other* Preachers, may be called in, if either party desire such assistance, and be incorporated with the Preachers stationed

But it is said that the object of the Conference was to strengthen District-Committees for the trial of Preachers. That could not be, for two reasons:—

First. That was sufficiently provided for, two years before, by the Plan of Pacification. If those persons who maintain the opinion just stated, would trouble themselves to look at the Plan of Pacification, they would see that it makes effectual provision for the trial of a Preacher, in all conceivable extraordinary cases. Is not a Meeting composed of all the Preachers of the District, and all the Trustees, Leaders, and Stewards of the Circuit, sufficient to try any offending Preacher whatever? Most people will think so; and, what is fatal to the interpretation above stated, the Conference thought so, not only at the time when the Plan was adopted, but in 1797 too. At the close of the Address to the Societies, which we have considered, in summing up the sacrifices it has made, the Conference adverts to the provision for trying a Preacher, as *already made* in the “Plan of Pacification,” in language which cannot be mistaken,—language which, if it signifies anything, must mean that the Conference regarded this provision as amply sufficient for every case of delinquency among the Preachers which could possibly occur.* With such views on the subject as are thus recorded, it was impossible that the Conference should immediately proceed to strengthen Districts for the trial of a Preacher. So far from this being all that was provided for in the following Regulations, the Conference does not seem to have contemplated such a case at all; at least, not directly. The object of these Regulations evidently appears to be this,—to strengthen the Districts in the exercise of that *extraordinary* power, by which they control the *whole* Connexion, and enforce the discipline where *ordinary* means are unavailing.

But there is another reason for the conclusion that the Conference did not design to strengthen District-Committees for the purpose of

in the District. Of these, *two shall be chosen by each of the two parties* concerned in the affairs to be settled by the Meeting.” This, however, must be regarded as an *enlargement* of the provision of the Rule of 1797, and not an *abrogation* of that Rule. The Conference of 1835 says, “*four* Superintendents, or other Preachers, *may* be called in;” but the parties against whom the proceedings are to be instituted, may *not* desire such assistance, and *may decline* to choose two additional Preachers. In such circumstances, if the Chairman judges that the case is one of so much difficulty, that it is requisite the District-Committee should be strengthened by the addition of other experienced Preachers, he is still at liberty to avail himself of the original provision of 1797, and call in “three of the nearest Superintendents” for that purpose.

The same Conference (of 1835) which, as is shown in a subsequent note, granted the privilege of a *Minor* District-Committee to any one complaining of expulsion from membership in the Society; extended the same provision to “a Superintendent complaining of any Leaders’-Meeting, for refusing to act its constitutional part, or for acting it factiously, or in contradiction to law and evidence, in the trial of an accused member.” For the prompt remedy of such a grievance, and to save the trouble and inconvenience of a full meeting of the District-Committee, it was resolved that he too should have the benefit of the *Minor* District-Committee. (See the “Special Address” of 1835, in Appendix D.)

* See Appendix B, the conclusion of the Address.

trying Preachers. The measures they adopted would have been regarded, at that day, as rendering the District-Committees *less*, rather than *more*, effective for the purpose. The Delegates who negotiated with the Conference, in 1795, having got the plan of administering the Sacraments adjusted, wanted security for its being preserved inviolate by the Preachers, by having the facilities increased for bringing them to justice, should they offend. According to the only then existing plan of trying Preachers, none but Preachers were the judges. It was thought this was not sufficient, in certain conceivable cases, for the purposes of justice; that Preachers might have too much partiality for one of their own order; and that, in such particular cases as were contemplated, certain laymen ought to be associated with the Preachers on the trial of an offending Preacher. To meet the wishes of the people on the subject, the Conference consented that, on the trial of a Preacher, all the Trustees, Stewards, and Leaders of the Circuit where the offence had been committed, should be joined with the District-Committee, and should have an equal right to vote,—that is, whenever they should “choose to interfere” as accusers: for this popular method of trial was never intended to set aside the mode of trial by the regular District-Committee, or a Minor District-Meeting; but was to be resorted to in those particular cases only, when the interference of the local officers should happen to be interposed.* According, then, to the views and feelings which some parties cherished in that day, to make such an addition of Preachers, as is provided for by the Rule under consideration, for the purpose of trying a Preacher, would not have been required to strengthen the Districts for the purposes of justice: it would rather have been considered as having an opposite tendency. In the view of those to whom I refer, more *laymen*, and not more *Preachers*, should have been added to the Committee, to have accomplished such an object.

Now on the true principle of interpreting these Regulations, a sufficient reason presents itself, both for strengthening District-Committees, and for strengthening them by the addition of certain Preachers. The Conference was well aware that it was a formidable power which it was conceding to the local meetings; and that a dominant faction might, by means of it, so obstruct and thwart a Superintendent in the management of the Circuit, as to throw all into disorder and confusion: and therefore, by the Regulations now under consideration, it arranged to balance this power conceded to the local meetings, by giving an increase of influence, wise counsel, and efficiency to the extraordinary jurisdiction of District-Committees. Under this view of the subject, all appears natural and consistent in the conduct of the Conference. There was a necessity for these Regulations, arising out of the concessions which the Conference was making. And as the strengthening of District-Committees was to balance the power which the *people* would henceforward have,—to add *Preachers*, such as were

* See Appendix B, the conclusion of the Address.

likely to increase, by their wisdom and experience, the moral "power" of District-Meetings, was really to strengthen them—to "render them more effective."

These views will receive confirmation, from a reference to the provision for making Districts more effective by the interference and visitation of the President of the Conference.* This Regulation stands first in the Minutes. It gives power to the President for two purposes. First, for the filling up of all vacancies, and for effecting any changes among the Preachers, which might be necessary in the intervals of the Conference. Secondly, "to assist at any District-Meeting, when invited by the Chairman, or a majority of the Superintendents;" and, when "written to by any concerned, to visit any Circuit to inquire into their affairs with respect to Methodism, and, in union with the District-Committee, to redress any grievance." It is truly astonishing, how any one can look at this Rule, and still say, that District-Committees have no power in a Circuit, but to try and remove a Preacher. Is this "visiting any Circuit by the President," and "inquiring into its affairs with respect to Methodism," and "this redressing of any grievance," by himself and the District-Committee, nothing at all but just this one business, of going into a Circuit, inquiring into the conduct of a Preacher, and punishing him if faulty? Does this examination of a *Circuit*, in regard to its Methodistic affairs, turn out, after all, to be nothing else than the examination of a *Preacher*, in respect to his Methodistic conduct in the Circuit? And is it for this one purpose, that the arrangement is made for giving the greatest possible efficiency to the District-Committee, by associating with it the first officer in the Connexion? To argue the point is impossible. What general terms can be employed to express all the difficult cases which can in any way occur in a Circuit, if this Rule does not?

The fourth Regulation deserves especial notice in this important question.† It alone, beyond all controversy, sets aside the principle which some so strenuously maintain,—that there can be no *foreign interference* with the affairs of a Society,—that all Society-affairs must be settled by the local meetings, with the Preachers of the Circuit. This Rule expressly provides for the attendance of the Chairman at the Quarterly-Meetings of the Circuits in his District. Can there be any

* "1. In order to render our Districts more effective, the President of the Conference shall have power, when applied to, to supply a Circuit with Preachers, if any should die or desist from travelling; and to sanction any change of Preachers which it may be necessary to make in the intervals of the Conference; and to assist at any District-Meeting, if applied to for that purpose, by the Chairman of the District, or by a majority of the Superintendents in such District. And he shall have a right, if written to by any who are concerned, to visit any Circuit, and to inquire into their affairs with respect to METHODISM, and, in union with the District-Committee, redress any grievance." (See Appendix B.)

† "4. The Conference recommends it to the Superintendents of the Circuits, to invite, on all important occasions, the Chairman of their respective District, to be present at their Quarterly-Meetings." (See Appendix B.)

quibbling here? Is a Quarterly-Meeting the Meeting to try a Preacher? Is not the business transacted there Circuit-business, and Circuit-business only? Here then is provision for foreign interference, in mere Circuit-business, as often as the *Superintendent* judges there will be need of such assistance. How those persons who tell us that the Conference, in its "Miscellaneous Regulations" respecting District-Committees, is only kindly contriving to secure to the people the benefit of its concessions,—(by enabling them to bring to trial tyrannical Superintendents,)—reconcile with their views the Rule now under consideration, it is not easy to divine. What, the Conference merely providing to protect the people against tyrannical Superintendents, and yet with the same breath recommending to the Superintendent to fetch the Chairman of the District into the Quarterly-Meeting of his Circuit, to help him in his projects! How, with their views, they can reconcile this Rule with the supposition that the Conference possessed common sense, it is as difficult to conceive. Had it been a settled point, that the local meetings had a right to that kind of independence now contended for, can it be supposed that the Conference, after solemnly recognising that independence, and providing means for its preservation, would have had the senseless temerity to recommend to its officers, to violate the independence of the local meetings to a greater extent than they had ever before attempted? And I ask those persons, how, on their principles, they can account for it, that when this Rule appeared in the printed Minutes, it did not throw the Connexion into greater agitation, and raise a greater clamour against the Conference than ever?

This Rule is one of much greater importance than some persons have attached to it, because it serves to show what were the views generally entertained in 1797 of foreign interference. So far from its being a thing so terrible to the Connexion in that day, it is found that even then, when the power of the Preachers was most objected to, not only the extraordinary jurisdiction of District-Committees was strengthened, to prevent an abuse of the power conceded to the local meetings; but provision was made for bringing into the Quarterly-Meeting one of the officers of the Conference, as often as the Superintendent (not the Stewards or Leaders) should see fit to do so. The body of Methodists of that day had been so familiarised with the frequent display of *foreign interference*, that the mention of it was not so startling to them as it appears to be to certain parties at the present time. Mr. Wesley had been dead only about six years; and the recollection of his visitations of the Circuits, and of his controlling the whole Societies, with their local officers and Preachers too, was yet fresh in the memory of the Connexion. As the interval from his death had been occupied by the District-Committees, which were created to succeed him in this department, foreign interference had thus ever been a practically acknowledged principle in Methodism. And the people sought not to destroy any of the essential features of the system: all they wanted was such a modification of the whole, as would afford

them a sufficient security for the enjoyment of their rights and privileges.

There are persons, however, who cannot but admit that the language of the "Miscellaneous Regulations" respecting District-Committees seems to have all that meaning which we maintain that it possesses, but they endeavour to evade its force, by arguing that these Regulations were made by the Conference after the Delegates had separated, and that therefore they are not binding. In what a light does this supposition place the principles of the Conference, by representing it as thus perfidiously taking back and increasing the power which it is supposed to have just resigned! With what a spirit of strangest infatuation does it assume the Conference to have been actuated in making such a desperate experiment! If the whole supposition be true that, in the first instance, the Conference, in negotiating with the Delegates, had given up the power of District-Committees, and then, on the departure of the Committee of Delegates, had made these Regulations to get back all its concessions, and even more; how was it that the people did not arise as one man, and at once, and for ever, renounce a body of Ministers who could thus act?

In my preceding inquiry into the proceedings of 1797, I have assumed the principle, that the "Miscellaneous Regulations" with respect to Districts were not an after-thought of the Conference, but a part of one grand whole, digested and agreed to at one and the same time; and there is sufficient evidence that this was the case. In its Circular Address of the 7th of August, the Conference tells the Societies that it has given only a general view of its proceedings; and that "in the *Regulations*" to be afterwards published, they would have "the whole at large." * We are thus directed for further information to "the Regulations," which the Conference promised, in its Address, to publish at the close of its sittings. In its "Minutes," which were printed *immediately* after its session for that year had terminated, the Conference republished its Circular Address of the 7th of August, and, in connexion therewith, gave a number of additional Rules which it had made, classed under seven heads, with the title of "Sundry Miscellaneous Regulations." * Now, as there is not in these "Regulations" any further explanation of the concessions contained in "the Address," the provisions respecting District-Committees, and the other matters touched on, are, unquestionably, the things to which the Conference refers, as *completing*, so far, however, as *new* regulations are concerned, the plan which it had digested for the future administration of Methodism.

In confirmation of this view of the subject, we may advert again to the "Minutes" of the Lay-Delegates. By the quotation which I have already given from their pamphlet, it will be seen,—

* See Appendix B at the end of this publication, which is a copy of the Address of the 7th of August, and the "Sundry Miscellaneous Regulations," from vol. i. of the "Minutes of the Methodist Conference," 8vo., pp. 374, 378.

1. That they asked the Conference for its judgment on the *Bristol* case.

2. That they proposed to the Conference, for its consideration, the regulation respecting the *making of new laws*; and,

3. Submitted for the consideration of the Conference a plan respecting the *executive* government.

This was on Saturday, the 5th of August. On the following Monday, the 7th, they record again in their Minutes, that they have received three letters from the Conference, signed by the President and Secretary. Letter No. 3 begins thus:—

DEAR BRETHREN,

THE Conference spent most of the forenoon in considering the subject mentioned in your letter relative to our *executive* government, and have passed the following Rules; namely,—

1. That in cases which (according to the judgment of the Chairman) cannot be settled in the ordinary District-Committee, he shall have authority to summon *three of the nearest Superintendents*, who shall be incorporated with the District-Committee, and have an equal right to vote, and settle every thing till the Conference, &c.

2. That if at any time the Conference see it necessary to *make any new Rule* for the Societies at large, &c.

The obnoxious Rule relative to the strengthening of the District-Committee by the addition of “three Superintendents,” is thus recorded by the Delegates as having been then passed by the Conference. What were the details of the plan, respecting the *executive* government, which the Delegates had proposed to the Conference, does not appear. But we have seen from their Minutes of *Saturday*, that the Rule last-mentioned, respecting new *legislation*, was proposed at the same time by the Delegates; and, as the Conference mentions, in the letter recorded by the Delegates on the following *Monday*, that this Rule had been adopted; and, when previously speaking of their plan respecting the executive government, further says, that they had passed the Rule respecting the three Superintendents;—there is presumption that this very Rule was the proposal of the Delegates, as well as the one respecting the making of laws. It is, indeed, hardly likely that the Delegates would ask the Conference to resign so much of its legitimate power as it has, in fact, conceded to the local meetings, without offering something to prevent the meetings from abusing its concessions. Be this, however, as it may, it is certain that this Rule was passed with the cognisance of the Delegates; as, doubtless, were the rest, although they are not given in detail in their Minutes.

The reason which induced the Conference to publish the concessions it had made, in an Address to the Societies, issued during its sittings, (on the 7th of August, the very day on which it sent the three letters above mentioned to the Delegates,) and reserved the regulations respecting District-Committees to be published afterwards, was,—that the Conference was anxious to give the Societies some information respecting what it had done as *early* as possible, and thus relieve them from the suspense in which they were held. The Conference, therefore, selects

the *concessions* which it had made to the local meetings in the *ordinary* administration, and leaves the regulations respecting its *extraordinary* administration to be published afterwards. This was a natural and obvious division. The people wanted to know what were the new privileges they were to enjoy. The Conference enumerates those which they would immediately receive. The concessions made in the *ordinary* administration were on *every-day* subjects, which would be *instantly* felt; but the regulations, which had for their object merely to prevent those concessions from being abused, were not provisions for every-day matters, but for *great emergencies*, which it was hoped would not often happen. These, therefore, were not published till the close of the Conference,—when the regulations with respect to Districts; the Rule against the admission of Lay-Delegates into the Conference or District-Meetings, and the Rules with regard to Preachers; the Resolutions on the *Bristol* case; (which was mentioned by the Delegates, as we have seen, in their Minutes of the 5th of August, and which the Conference immediately decided on;) and Resolutions on some other subjects,—were all classed together under the title of “Sundry Miscellaneous Regulations,” and printed, as has been shown, in the “Minutes” of the Conference published at its close.*

* When I wrote this Essay, in 1828, I had not been able to ascertain whether the Conference of 1797 had published the “Sundry Miscellaneous Regulations” in any other manner than as they appeared in its printed “Minutes” of that year. Those Minutes appeared to warrant the expectation, that all the legislative enactments of that year, with a Collection of Rules of preceding years, would be published in a *separate* form for general use. In the Minutes of that Conference, under the date of August 1st, the Conference says,—

“Whereas, we, the undersigned, have, on this and the preceding day, carefully revised the Rules drawn up and left us by our late venerable Father in the Gospel, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, which were published by him in our Large Minutes, to which we consented when we were admitted, and by which we were regulated during his life: And whereas, we have collected together those Rules which we believe to be essential to the existence of Methodism, as well as others to which we have no objection, we do now VOLUNTARILY and in GOOD FAITH, sign our names, as approving of, and engaging to comply with, the aforesaid Collection of Rules, or Code of Laws, God being our Helper.” (Vol. i., 8vo., p. 360.)

To this declaration are appended the names of the Ministers assembled on the occasion.

In its Circular Address “To the Methodist Societies,” issued on the 7th of the same month, the Conference adds,—

“V. We have selected all our ancient Rules, which were made before the death of our late venerable Father in the Gospel, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, which are essential Rules, or prudential at this present time; and have solemnly signed them, declaring our approbation of them, and determination to comply with them, one single Preacher excepted, who, in consequence, withdrew from us. (Before the Conference concluded, two other Preachers withdrew.)

“VI. We have determined that all the Rules which relate to the Societies, Leaders, Stewards, Local Preachers, Trustees, and Quarterly-Meetings, shall be published with the Rules of the Society, for the benefit and convenience of all the Members.” (Vol. i., p. 376.)

Then, in conclusion, after stating that the design of this Circular was to give to the Societies, “in as concise a manner” as possible, an *early* notice of its proceedings, the Conference remarks,—

As a proof of the amicable manner in which the negotiations between the Delegates and the Conference terminated, the Resolution with which the Delegates closed their sittings is here introduced.—

RESOLVED,—That the thanks of this Meeting be unanimously given to the President, and the members of the Conference, for their kind attention to the business of the Delegation of the Trustees that has been laid before them; and that it is their determination to support the Methodist cause *upon the plan agreed on this Conference.*

“In the Regulations which will be published with the Rules of the Society, as mentioned above, you will have the whole at large.” (P. 378.)

From the language thus employed by the Conference, I was led to make inquiry for some *separate* publication, which should embody the whole of the Methodist discipline as revised and settled at its important session in that year. Some of the agitators in 1828, observing that the Selection of Rules printed in the Class-books did not contain the “Miscellaneous Regulations” of 1797, relating “to Districts,” given in the Minutes of the Conference, were anxious to have it believed, that that Selection was the one which the Conference of 1797 published, according to the intimation it had given in the extracts from the Minutes of the Conference, just quoted. But this view, on examination, appeared untenable on various grounds:—

1. The Conference of 1797 promised, that the “*whole*” of its legislative proceedings should be published; but the collection in the Class-books is professedly only a *Selection* of the Rules deemed “most material.”

2. This Selection of Rules in the Class-books does not merely omit the “Miscellaneous Regulations with respect to Districts,” but also some of the most important concessions to the people, enumerated by the Conference in its Circular Address to the Societies; as, for instance, the Regulation (vol. i., p. 376) by which a Quarterly-Meeting, in conjunction with the Preachers, is empowered to suspend for a year, in the Circuit to which it belongs, the operation of any new Rule which the Conference might make for the Societies at large. That Selection of Rules which thus left out such an important popular concession, it appeared obvious to my mind, could not possibly be the publication to which the Conference of 1797 had referred; whatever the agitators of 1828, in the efforts of their blind zeal to get rid of the Miscellaneous Regulations relating to Districts, might urge in favour of that opinion. And,

3. It was manifest on the face of the thing, that the Selection of Rules in the Class-books was not published at all by the Conference of 1797; for, under the head of “Rules relating to the Officers of the Societies,” it contains a Rule of the Conference of 1801; and this Rule was given by Dr. Warren in his “Digest,” as one included in the original edition of this Collection.

The Class-book, it was thus evident, did not meet the expectation raised by the Conference of 1797. And it was equally clear, that a new edition of the Collection, known by the name of the “Large Minutes,” originally made by Mr. Wesley, and presented to the Preachers when received into full Connexion, could not be the publication which appeared to be contemplated by the Conference. The Conference, it would seem, did not intend merely a *revision* of that Manual, which was chiefly for the use of Preachers, but such a “*Collection* of Rules,”—old ones revised, and new ones included,—as they believed *essential to the very existence of Methodism*, and, therefore, a “Code of Laws,” such as concerned not only the Preachers, but the Connexion at large. My copy of the “Large Minutes,”—printed in 1817, with the old title of “Minutes of several Conversations between the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., and others, from the year 1744 to the year 1789,”—exhibited no pretensions to the character of such a “Code of Laws,” as that which the Conference of 1797 digested and subscribed. Although it had received the addition of the Plan of Pacification of 1795, and the Circular Address of the Conference of 1797, with two Forms of Deeds of Trust, it did not contain the “Miscellaneous Regulations” of 1797 with respect to Districts, nor, indeed, any of the Regulations relating to District-Committees adopted in preceding years. It may be remarked, in passing, that the omission of these Regulations in a book chiefly designed for the guidance of

Before we pass from the subject of District-Committees, it may, however, be proper to notice an argument which has more lately been employed. It is now admitted by some, that the Special District-

Preachers, ought to have been regarded by those persons who maintained that the Regulations respecting Districts concerned the Preachers only, as having a most unfavourable bearing upon their argument.

Neither of these Collections, therefore, accorded with the intimation given by the Conference. Nor did they unitedly. They did not together comprise the "whole at large" of the "Regulations," partly collected from the earlier Minutes, and partly adopted at the Conference of 1797, to which the language of the Conference seemed to refer. Until my Essay had passed through the press, I had not met with any publication answering the expectation raised by the language of the Conference. Shortly afterwards, a friend in Liverpool informed me, that he had found, among some old Methodist publications in his library, a pamphlet containing a Collection of various Minutes of the Conference, which was at my service; although he did not suppose that it would bear upon the controversy then going on, as it had been published as early as the year 1779. A cursory examination was sufficient to show that the date was a misprint. It had been published by George Whitfield; but Mr. Atlay, not George Whitfield, was the Book-Steward in 1779; the pamphlet included all the Regulations of the Conference of 1797; and a comparison of the title of the book with the language of the Conference of 1797, at once suggested the conclusion, that this must be the identical publication intimated by the Conference of that year, in its Circular Address to the Societies. The title was as follows:—

"Minutes of several Conversations between the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., and the Preachers in Connexion with him. Containing the Form of Discipline established among the Preachers and People in the Methodist Societies. London: Printed for G. Whitfield, City-Road, and sold at all the Methodist Preaching-Houses, in Town and Country, 1779."

The language employed by the Ministers assembled at the Conference of 1797, in the Declaration, which they subscribed with their own names, and in their Circular Address to the Societies, clearly showed that the "Collection of Rules" which they had made from the Minutes, was subscribed by them as a Code of Methodist Law; and, in accordance therewith, the title of the pamphlet represented it to be such a Collection of Minutes as contained "The Form of Discipline established among the Preachers and People in the Methodist Societies." A closer inspection of the contents of the pamphlet confirmed the impression made by its title. It contained the collection of Minutes which the Conference of 1797 made and signed at its early sittings; to which were added all the disciplinary and financial regulations adopted in the subsequent part of its session of that year; and the whole were so harmonized, under thirty-five heads, as to indicate something like Code-making. The book was not such a classification of Rules as might be made by any private individual; but a Collection in which the Rules were so adjusted to each other, and an occasional ambiguity removed, as to indicate legislative sanction and authority. In short, this "Form of Discipline established among the Preachers and People in the Methodist Societies," although not containing the "Rules of Society," appeared to be the only publication which could claim to be considered as the "Code of Laws" referred to by the Conference of 1797; and the testimony of competent witnesses subsequently established the fact, that this was the very "Code of Laws" published at the Book-Room, by order of the Conference, before the end of the year 1797, when George Whitfield was the Book-Steward.

What then is the evidence furnished by this important publication, on the question relating to the "Sundry Miscellaneous Regulations with respect to Districts," contained in the Minutes of the Conference of 1797? Are they included in this Code of Laws? Or is it silent upon the subject? It cannot be denied that, had not these Regulations been given in the publication in which the Conference of 1797, in its Address, intimated to the Societies they should have "the whole, at large," of the "Regulations" which had been adopted,—the omission would have afforded

Meeting certainly has the right, when legally convened, to interfere with the affairs of the Society, but that it has no power to act except through the medium, and by means of, the Leaders'-Meeting: and

some show of plausibility to the objections which the agitators urged against those Regulations. But this "Form of Discipline,"—this "Code of Laws," does fully comprise the Regulations in question; and they are not introduced, as though incidentally, but so arranged and harmonized with the Rules of preceding years on the same subject, as to form a complete and connected view of Methodist Law on District-Committees as at that time settled. In the Minutes of the Conference of 1797, the five "Miscellaneous Regulations" relating to Districts are arranged in this manner:—

1. The Regulation for making the Districts more effective, by the interference or visitation of the President of the Conference.
2. The Rule relating to the responsibility of the Chairman for the execution of the Laws in his District.
3. The provision for calling in the assistance of three Superintendents from some other District or Districts.
4. The Regulation for the attendance of the Chairman at the Quarterly-Meetings of the Circuits in his District.
5. The Rule for the election of every Chairman of District by the ballot of the Conference.

In the "Code of Laws," the fifth, or last of these, is placed in connexion with the District-Regulations of the year 1792, instead of the one, which it had virtually abrogated, providing for the election of the Chairman by the members of his own District merely. The order of the other four Regulations is inverted, and the first, relating to the President, comes last. The following is an exact copy of them as they are given in the "Form of Discipline," or "Code of Laws:":—

"The Chairman of each District, in conjunction with his brethren of that District, shall be responsible to the Conference for the execution of our Laws, as far as his District is concerned.

"The Chairman in all cases which (in his judgment) cannot be settled in the ordinary District-Meetings, shall have authority to summon three of the nearest Superintendents to be incorporated with the District-Committee, who shall have equal authority to vote, and settle everything till the Conference.

"The Conference recommends it to the Superintendents of the Circuits, to invite, on all important occasions, the Chairman of their respective District, to be present at their Quarterly-Meetings.

"In order to render our Districts more effective, the President of the Conference shall have power, when applied to by the Superintendent, to supply any Circuit with Preachers, if any should die or desist from travelling; and to sanction any change of Preachers which it may be necessary to make in the intervals of Conference. And to assist at any District-Meeting, if applied to for that purpose by the Chairman of the District, or by a majority of the Superintendents in such District. And he shall have a right (if written to by any who are concerned) to visit any Circuit, and to inquire into their affairs with respect to *Methodism*,* and, in union with the District-Committee, redress any grievance."

Now this alteration indicates thought and design. It is evidently an intentional arrangement, by which all the Regulations relating to the Chairman, his District, and District-Committee, follow each other in a natural and methodical manner; and then the whole is properly closed with the provision for rendering the Districts still more effective, by the visitation of the President, the highest officer in the Connexion. The evidence furnished by the pamphlet is thus most important; for although the argument in support of the validity of the "Miscellaneous Regulations" would have been satisfactory, providing that the Conference had never issued such a *separate* publication as it appeared from its Address to contemplate; yet that argument is rendered complete and impregnable by the consideration, that the Regulations in question are made part and parcel of Methodistic Law, as embodied

* Italics are used in the pamphlet. In the Minutes of the Conference the word is in small capitals.

the design of this argument is to show, that the power of the District-Committee in interfering with local affairs is not *judicial*, but merely the power of argument and persuasion. In answer to this, I would

in the "Form of Discipline," which the Conference did publish in fulfilment of its intimation.

It may be proper here to place on permanent record the fact, that this identical copy of the "Form of Discipline," which had thus come into my hands, was the very same copy afterwards produced in the Courts of Chancery, in the proceedings instituted by Dr. Warren in the year 1835; and was recognised, at that time, as the Methodist "Code of Laws," first by Sir Lancelot Shadwell, the Vice-Chancellor, and, subsequently, on Dr. Warren's Appeal from the Vice-Chancellor's decision, by Lord Lyndhurst, then Lord High Chancellor of England. The light in which this publication was regarded by these eminent Judges, will appear from a quotation or two from the report of their respective Judgments. In the report of the Vice-Chancellor's Judgment, delivered March 3d, 1835, it is stated:—

"His Honour then referred to the Collection of Rules which the Conference of 1797 had published in a separate pamphlet. This 'Code of Laws' confirmed the view he had given, that the 'Plan of Pacification' did not supersede the regular District-Committee; for it contained the Resolutions of 1791, and the two or three succeeding years, respecting District-Meetings; and he commented on *some slight alterations in their phraseology as evidence of the care which had been taken in harmonizing them.*"

The Lord Chancellor, on the 25th of the same month, in confirming the powers of the District-Committee, against the claims founded on the "Plan of Pacification," remarked:—

"But the case does not at all rest here: the case is much stronger. In the year 1797 it was considered by the Conference, who are the legislative body, that it was of importance to the Connexion, and for the purpose of promoting harmony, and for the purpose of pointing out the line of duty which individuals should pursue, that it was of importance to publish the existing Rules of the Society. In the preamble to this it says, 'And whereas we have collected together those Rules which we believe to be essential to the existence of Methodism, as well as others to which we have no objection,—we do now voluntarily, and in good faith, sign our names, as approving of, and engaging to comply with, the aforesaid Collection of Rules, or Code of Laws, God being our Helper.' Now that Code has been given in evidence. It is the document described by the letter 'F,'—the 'Exhibit F.'"

On this Code his Lordship further remarked:—

"Who are the parties promulgating these Laws? Not parties who had slight information; not persons who had only a slight knowledge of the constitution of Methodism: why, it was the legislators themselves,—it was the very party who promulgated the 'Act of Pacification;' it was they who promulgated this law, and who, by that very act of their own promulgation, made it become of itself a Legislative Act; and it is a declaration, by the legislature, that the power of suspension still continues in the District-Committee."

These extracts sufficiently show the importance which the Vice-Chancellor and the Lord Chancellor attached to the publication in question; and prove that they recognised it as an authoritative Code of Methodist law. Their conclusion in its favour is the more valuable, on account of the strenuous attempt which was made to destroy its authority, and establish the rival claims of another collection of Minutes, put in by Dr. Warren's Counsel,—namely, the Collection of Rules called the "Large Minutes," to which I have already referred as not containing the Regulations on District-Committees. Respecting this, his Lordship remarked:—

"I must advert here, however, to another document, which was put in on the other side, and much insisted upon; which is handed, as I understand,—and I believe that it appears in the affidavits,—to each Preacher at the time of his ordination; and which document is accompanied with this declaration,—that, 'as long as you conform and adhere to those Rules, we shall receive you as our fellow-labourer in the ministry.' That contains the 'Act of Pacification;' it contains the

ask, Was the power which Mr. Wesley exercised over the Societies, and which, after his death, was vested in District-Committees, nothing more than a power of persuasion? When such means would not avail,

Act of the year 1797; but it takes no notice of the preceding Acts: and it is said, therefore, that that document is to be put in opposition to the 'Code of Laws' published in the year 1797, and is to be considered, *pro tanto*, as an abrogation of them. But I consider this as nothing more than as a guide to the conduct of the Preacher. It is not intended as a perfect Code of Laws; for this obvious reason,—*that the Regulations as to the District-Committee are entirely excluded from it*, not merely for the purpose of trial, but *for all other purposes*. It is quite obvious, on the face of that document itself, *it was not intended as a transcript of the Code of Laws*, as then existing, but as a mere guide and assistant to the Preacher."

It was thus, after a careful comparison of the two publications, that the Lord Chancellor rejected the claims urged in favour of the "Large Minutes" in Dr. Warren's behalf, and decided that the "Form of Discipline" with the misprint of 1779 must be received as the full and complete "Code of Laws" published for the body at large, by the Conference of 1797.

This decision of the Lord Chancellor had an unfavourable bearing upon the argument of those who have wished to make it appear that the Conference of 1797 issued two *separate* publications,—the "Large Minutes," revised for the guidance of the Preachers; and the Collection of Rules bound up in the Class-book, which related to the people. Dr. Warren was claimed by the agitators of 1828 as an authority in support of that opinion. In his "Chronicles of Wesleyan Methodism," or "Digest of all its Laws and Regulations," published two years before, he had copied at length the Collection called the "Large Minutes," and described it as that public document "by which the special character and work of the Preachers are defined, and which contains most of the Rules whereby they consent to be governed." And under the head of "The People," he had given a copy of the Rules of the Society, and the accompanying Selection of Rules, as found in the Class-book. But I have not observed that he anywhere speaks of these two Collections as having been published by the Conference of 1797, with the view of giving—in the former, the Rules which it had revised and enlarged for the direction of the Preachers, and—in the latter, the Rules and Regulations then adopted for the use of the people. The two Collections together, I have already stated, do not by any means comprise all the principal Rules collected, revised, and enlarged by the Conference of 1797. A reference to the Class-book will at once show that it does not contain the "Miscellaneous Regulations" of 1797, with respect to Districts, nor any of the District-Regulations of preceding Conferences; and I again affirm, however the contrary may be asserted, that neither does the Collection called the "Large Minutes" comprise them. Dr. Warren did not include them in the copy of that publication which he gives in his "Digest." That copy ends with the 70th Question, as in the publication itself; and all that follows, under the general head of "The Conference," is a methodical arrangement of Minutes of Conference selected by Dr. Warren himself. And neither did the separate publication of the "Large Minutes," exhibited by Dr. Warren in Chancery,—as appears from the quotation from the Lord Chancellor's Judgment,—contain the Conference-Regulations with respect to Districts. The object of his application to Chancery was to obtain the protection of the Court against the jurisdiction of the District-Committee; and the publication called the "Large Minutes" was there exhibited by him with a view to further that object, by showing that the "Collection of Minutes which relate to the Preachers" did not contain the Regulations respecting District-Committees. Sir Charles Wetherell, the Doctor's leading Counsel, objected to the "Form of Discipline," or "Code of Laws,"—which, however, *he* admitted was published in 1797,—for the reason that in it (he said) "all the old rubbish of the law is printed;" and he desired to establish the authority of the "Large Minutes," because that publication "left out all those old glosses;" which he doubtless felt were most unfavourable to his client's interests.

But, without dwelling longer on the opinions and proceedings of Dr. Warren,—

did he not use a power strictly and properly *judicial*, expelling members and turning out officers, as the case required? I ask again, Is it possible that District-Committees can be made to answer, in *all* cases, the end of their institution, if they have no *judicial* power to exercise? If the case with which the District-Committee is summoned to deal should be that of a dominant faction, which, sheltering itself under the forms of Methodist law, successfully opposes the Superintendent in

the Lord Chancellor's rejection of the claims set up in favour of the "Large Minutes," and his recognition of the "Exhibit F," as being the full and complete Code of Methodist Law, which the Conference of 1797 published in accordance with the intimation which it had given, effectually explode the notion that that Conference fulfilled its intention by issuing two separate publications,—the one, a Revision of the "Large Minutes" for the Preachers; and the other, the Selection of Rules in the Class-book, for the use of the people. The Manual of "Large Minutes," with the addition of the "Plan of Pacification," and the Circular of 1797, was kept in print, after 1797, for presentation to Preachers on their ordination; but it was by the publication of the complete "Code of Laws," contained in "Exhibit F," that the Conference executed its design. The Selection of Rules in the Class-book, it may be remarked, did not emanate from the Conference of 1797 at all. It was a selection of such Rules as were of every-day use, got up some time afterwards, for the sake of easy reference, and published, with the Rules of the Society, at the Book-Room. But although the compiler refers to the Circular Address of the Conference of 1797 as authorizing such a publication, he could not possibly suppose that that Selection was what the Conference had in contemplation when, at the close of its Circular, apologizing for the brevity of the Circular, it intimated to the Societies that they should afterwards have "*the whole at large*." Nor could the managers of the Book-Room of that day really intend that that Selection should be considered as the "Code of Laws" referred to in the Circular of the Conference of 1797, when it did not contain one of the most important concessions in favour of the people made by that Conference. The Conference had said: "In respect to all new Rules which shall be made by the Conference, it is determined, that if at any time the Conference see it necessary to make any new Rule for the Societies at large, and such Rule should be objected to at the first Quarterly-Meeting in any given Circuit; and if the major part of that Meeting, in conjunction with the Preachers, be of opinion, that the enforcing of such Rule in that Circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that Circuit; it shall not be enforced in opposition to the judgment of such Quarterly-Meeting, before the second Conference," &c. This concession had been asked for by the Delegates, as has been shown from their Minutes; and such importance was attached to it, that the Conference included it in the brief Circular which it issued on the 7th of August, for the purpose of giving the earliest notice to the Societies of the measures which it had adopted. Is it possible, then, that the managers of the Book-Committee could avowedly publish the Class-book Collection, with such an important omission, as the "Code of Laws" referred to by the Conference of 1797, when most of the Delegates who asked for this concession on legislation were probably still alive, and the transactions of 1797 were comparatively fresh in the memory of the people? Had such been their intention and object, how was it that such an attempt at imposition did not call forth an universal burst of indignation from the Connexion? The silence maintained at the time is proof that the thing was then properly understood, and that the Class-book Collection was not received as the "Code of Laws" settled in 1797, but as a brief selection of Rules for every-day use.

It may be added, as a matter of information, that the pamphlet recognised by the Lord Chancellor as the Code of 1797 was reprinted in 1835, and has ever since been on sale at the Methodist Book-Room, in City-Road. From that time, moreover, the publication has been regularly presented to Preachers, on their ordination at the Conference, instead of the "Large Minutes" in the form originally prepared by Mr. Wesley.

the exercise of his functions, could not this same faction just as effectually resist the District-Committee too? Most certainly it could. The District-Committee must then have a proper *judicial* power to exercise in cases of greatest emergency. I plead for no wanton display of this power. I not only grant, but I maintain, that the ordinary forms of administering discipline, as settled by the Regulations of 1797, are not to be trifled with. I say, Let the District-Committee accomplish its object, if possible, by counsel, by persuasion, by entreaty; but if all these methods completely fail, I ask, What then? Is all to be given up as lost, and a triumphant faction to be left without control? The Conference of 1797 and the Delegates did not think so. They agreed that the Chairman and District-Committee should be still held responsible for the execution of the laws in their District. But how can there be responsibility where there is not a commensurate power? The Conference and the Delegates could never have concluded thus, if they did not mean that, in such extreme cases as will not yield to milder methods, the District-Committee must exercise a power strictly and properly *judicial*, and redress the grievance. And who can reasonably complain of such a power as this, which can never be brought to bear upon any of the people, till a local court has abused the privileges conceded by the Conference, and misapplied them to the purposes of faction and misrule? Is the Conference to have no adequate means of securing its concessions from being so perverted from their original design?

Some persons dwell much upon what they term the “compact” of 1797. But do they intend that, had a “compact” in the strict and proper sense of the term then taken place, only one of the parties should be under obligation to perform its conditions? They certainly entertain strange views of what is just and right, if they imagine, that the Leaders’-Meetings, influenced by a factious spirit, or acting from misapprehension, are at liberty to pervert the concessions of 1797, for the purpose of preventing the exercise of discipline; while the Conference remains bound by its engagements, and must not be allowed to interfere. This was not the principle upon which the arrangements of 1797 were made. The Conference then conceded, that, in the regular and ordinary administration of Methodism, a Superintendent should not exclude a person from Society, until the offence had been proved to the satisfaction of the Leaders’-Meeting; but it, at the same time, effectually provided for the maintenance and enforcement of discipline by *the collective pastorate of the District*, in any Circuit where the spirit of party or faction may prevent its administration by the local courts.*

* The views which this part of the Essay was designed to establish, respecting the end for which District-Committees were introduced, and the powers with which they were intrusted for the enforcement of discipline upon the whole body of Preachers and people,—were afterwards amply confirmed by the judgments delivered in the Courts of Chancery, in Dr. Warren’s case, in 1835, referred to in the preceding note. The Lord Chancellor,—who stated, “that he had looked with considerable attention into the volumes of Minutes” of the Conference which had

There is an original principle in the constitution of Methodism, which did not undergo any change whatever, in 1795 and 1797,—the principle that any individual, or body of individuals, have a right to

been handed up to him, which, he added, “breathe a spirit of meekness and Christian feeling throughout;” and whose judgment in favour of the separate pamphlet, entitled, the “Form of Discipline,” has been given in the preceding note,—recognised the Conference as “the legislative body” in the Methodist Connexion, and, consequently, the validity of its Laws or Regulations; and he dwelt on the importance of referring to the *usage* of Conference as a help in fixing their meaning,—for the reason “that it is the usage of the very legislative body itself, acting under and interpreting its own laws.” He considered that the District-Committees were *Committees of the Conference*, instituted at Mr. Wesley’s death, as subordinate jurisdictions for maintaining its discipline throughout the Connexion; and he decided that the Plan of Pacification of 1795 does not take a Preacher out of the jurisdiction of the District-Committee, except in that specified class of cases in which “the Trustees, Stewards, and Leaders *choose* to interfere.”

The remarks of his Lordship on the *extent* of the jurisdiction of District-Committees are very important. In his judgment, so far from District-Committees having been appointed merely to exercise discipline upon Preachers, the trial of a Preacher was only *one* of that class of *critical cases* for the settlement of which they were provided. Having made some introductory observations upon the case under the consideration of the court, his Lordship said:—

“It is to the law passed in 1791 that I must first direct my attention; because it appears to me that, upon the just construction of that law, much of the present case necessarily depends.

“In the year 1791, then, after the death of Mr. Wesley, for the first time, Districts throughout the kingdom were established; and a provision was made to this effect,—that the Assistant of the Circuit shall have the power of convening together the Preachers of the District upon ‘any critical case which might occur;’ that they should have the power of appointing a Chairman, when so met; that their decision upon the matter before them should be final, until the next Conference; that the Chairman should report the proceedings to the Conference, who, upon that report, should act as the Conference should think proper and just. This is the first law to which I think it necessary attention should be directed.

“Nothing is said with respect to offences committed by Preachers,—nothing is said as to the trial of Preachers; but still, taking the language and the spirit and the scope of this law, and the nature of the Society, can it for a moment be doubted, that if a Preacher had so conducted himself.....as to introduce discord, and to disturb the harmony of a Society like this, and endanger the Connexion, that that would not be considered as a ‘critical case,’ justifying the Assistant in calling the Meeting of the Preachers? If so,—and they had the power to decide, and their decision was to be final till the next Conference,—is it not quite obvious, that it might, in many instances, be necessary, under such circumstances, for the purpose of preserving the very existence of such a Society, that the Meeting should have the power of suspending or removing the Preacher, subject always to the ratification or opinion of the Conference?

“It appears to me, notwithstanding the generality of these terms, it embraces the very case in question; and that if the law had stopped here, and no other Act had been passed,—that, under this Act of Conference, in the year 1791, any Preacher who misconducted himself to such an extent as to disturb the peace and harmony of the Society, would justify the Assistant in calling a Meeting; and that, when the Meeting assembled, they would be justified, if they thought the case one of such description as to endanger the peace and harmony of the Society, to suspend or remove him till the next Conference. I consider this, therefore, as the basis of the law with respect to this subject.”

Again, on the authority of the District-Committee to decide *when its interference is necessary*, his Lordship, referring to the disciplinary act of the Manchester District-Committee, thus met the question, “Had they power to do so?”—

appeal to the Conference for redress of grievances. This principle has been assailed in the charge advanced against the Conference, that it has violated its own law, in allowing an appeal from the decision of the District-Committee, on the subject of the Leeds organ; and the

“Why, I refer them (those who ask the question) back to that which I consider to be the foundation of the whole of this authority; namely, the Law of 1791. In a case of emergency, the District-Committee may meet,—they may consider that case of emergency. It is not for us to say whether it was a case of emergency or not; it is for that particular tribunal—the District-Committee—to say whether it was a case of emergency or not. They did meet; they considered it was a case of emergency; and they had a power to decide according to their own discretion, and their decision is final until the next Conference. What did they decide? They decided, that because he did not choose to attend the investigation of the case, he should be suspended. I think this comes clearly within the scope and meaning of the Article of 1791, as coupled with the Law of 1792, and that they had power to do what they did.”

Then, again, as to the power of the District-Committee, when assembled, *to regulate its own proceedings*, his Lordship remarked:—

“It is said that Dr. Warren was harshly treated, in their not allowing Mr. Bromley (I think his name was) to attend with him at that Meeting. With that I have really nothing to do. The District-Committee had a power to regulate their own proceedings. They had a power to do so.....they did exercise that power that no stranger should be present. They have authority to do that; and that does not, therefore, render the proceedings illegal or invalid.”

Further, in regard to the authority of the District-Committee *to determine what constitutes an offence* to be visited with discipline, his Lordship thus met the argument—that the publication of the pamphlet by the Plaintiff was not an offence entitling this body to exercise the jurisdiction, and that it did not support the charges that were preferred against him:—

“Whether it did support those charges, or not, was a question for the District-Meeting. I have no jurisdiction with respect to it. A particular tribunal is established by the agreement of those parties to decide a question of this kind; I have, therefore, no authority to say, whether, within the meaning of the Rules of this Society, this pamphlet was, or was not, an offence: that was peculiarly for the decision of the District-Committee.”

These extracts, the importance of which is my apology for giving them at such length, it will be apparent, establish two conclusions:—

1. That the legal interpretation of the Regulations appointing District-Committees is in accordance with the literal and popular meaning of the language which is used; that they were, in fact, instituted to deal with *any kind*—with *all kinds*—of *critical cases* which might occur in the Districts. It was the very “*generality of the terms*” employed, which enabled his Lordship to bring the *one case* of the trial of a Preacher within the jurisdiction of the District-Committee.

2. It is the prerogative of the District-Committee to determine *what is such a “critical case”* as calls for interference; *what constitutes an offence* requiring the exercise of discipline; and *in what manner it shall regulate its proceedings* on any case of which it determines to take cognisance.

It may be remarked, in conclusion, that the Lord Chancellor examined carefully the proceedings of the Conference of 1797, and decided that there was nothing in its legislation of that year militating against the powers of the District-Committee. The Vice-Chancellor too,—whose Judgment the Lord-Chancellor affirmed,—attentively considered this matter. The report states,—

“His Honour.....then showed that the passage in the Address of 1797, on which stress had been laid, did not mean that the Conference had set aside the District-Committee in *spiritual* matters. Instead of this, the Conference had made, at the same time, additional Regulations for the express and avowed purpose of making the District-Committees ‘more effective’ for managing, in the intervals of the Conference, *the spiritual and ecclesiastical concerns of the body.*”

examining of this charge will be, perhaps, the best method which I can adopt to show the importance of the principle which it attacks.*

The first thing which strikes us in the reasoning by which the charge in question is attempted to be maintained, is a rejection of the word *appeal*, and the adoption in its stead of the word *application*. By this substitution of one word for the other, the Leeds Special District-Meeting is ridiculously made to say in its Minutes,—that the Rule on organs sends the applicants to the District-Meeting for leave to apply to the Conference, and tells them, at the same time, that the Conference will receive their application without leave. What the Leeds Special District-Meeting really maintains is,—that while the Rule requires the *application* to be made to the District-Meeting, it is a principle in Methodism, that if the applicants are aggrieved by the decision of the District-Committee, they have a right to *appeal* to the Conference.

In this confounding of the application to the District-Committee, with the appeal to the Conference, those persons expose their own ignorance of the practice of District-Meetings and the Conference. They evidently suppose, that, if the Trustees had obtained the sanction of the District-Meeting to their application, they (the Trustees) would then have had to go and make their application, *thus sanctioned*, to the Conference. Not so: if the District-Meeting had sanctioned the application, the Trustees would have done with it; and instead of *their* applying to the Conference, the business would have been removed to the Conference by the District-Committee, and would have been managed there by the *representative* of the District. From this view of the practice of District-Meetings, and the Conference, it is evident, that it could not be one and the same application which the Trustees made to the District-Committee, and subsequently to the Conference. The *application* for an organ could only go to Conference through the medium, and by means, of the District-Committee; but as the District-Meeting rejected it, it could not then go to the Conference at all. It was nothing but an *appeal* which the Conference could and did, in fact, receive from the Trustees.

But it is said, that the appeal was an application; therefore, of course, the application of the Trustees and their appeal were one and the same thing. And so, because an appeal is an application, every application is an appeal! This is just as good an argument as the following:—"A lawyer is a man, therefore every man is a lawyer." It was an application which the Trustees made to the District-Meeting, and their appeal to the Conference was an application; but they were neither the same application nor the same kind of application. The application to the District-Committee was an application for a privilege,—the application to the Conference was for redress of a grievance. But we are told, that the object of both applications was the

* For the Rule on Organs, see Appendix C.

same,—to get leave for an organ ; and, therefore, the applications themselves were one and the same. This will prove that there can be no such thing as an appeal at all, as well as that there cannot be one to the Conference on the subject of an organ. When a person brings a cause into a civil court, and, not being satisfied with the judgment, appeals to a higher court, has he not one and the same object in view—the recovery of his right? But, according to those persons, as the object is the same, his appeal is no appeal,—it is only the same application repeated in the higher court, which he had made in the lower.

In combating the position—that the Conference had a right to receive the *application* of the Trustees when rejected by the District-Committee, those persons are fighting a man of straw which themselves had first set up. No one contends for such a thing as that to which they object. What is maintained is,—that the Conference had a right to receive the *appeal* of the Trustees. The appeal is the thing contended for ; and those persons confound it with the application to the District-Committee, and then argue that it ought not to have been received.

And this their error is to be traced to that capital mistake which I, in the first instance, exposed. Did they view the Conference as the “supreme power,” they could not consistently come to such a conclusion. For it is well known to all who make pretensions to political knowledge, that wherever there is the power to make laws, there is a right to receive appeals from the subordinate courts intrusted with their execution. If an inferior court mistakes the law, or, from an improper bias, gives a wrong decision, is there to be no remedy? It is strange that Englishmen can say, “No ;” when the civil constitution under which they live, and of which they make their boast, provides so amply for correcting the errors of the courts which have to administer justice. Causes tried in inferior courts may be removed into the Court of Queen’s Bench ; yet even this so high and honourable Court is not the *dernier resort* of the subject ; for if he be not satisfied with any determination here, he may remove it again to other courts. The House of Lords is the highest court of appeal ; and its decisions are final. Now, it is surprising that, familiarised, as Englishmen, with this principle of appeal from the executive to the hereditary branch of the Legislature, those persons can maintain that the Conference violated its own law, in receiving an appeal from the District-Meeting, on the subject of the organ. Take an Act of Parliament, and compare it with the Rule respecting organs : the Act says nothing about an appeal to the House of Lords, any more than the Rule does about an appeal to the Conference ; but, nevertheless, a cause is decided by it in a court of justice on the understood principle, that, if either of the parties be aggrieved, he can appeal from the decision of the court to a higher, and, finally, to the Legislature. According to those persons, however, a Methodist, or body of Methodists, may feel themselves aggrieved by the decision of a District-Meeting ; but they must sit

down quietly, there is to be no redress for them. And those, too, are the persons who talk so loudly of liberty.

What those who charge the Conference with violating its own Rule say, would appear something more like argument, providing that the Conference had not been in the frequent habit of receiving appeals; or that the Rule on organs had contained any expression amounting to this,—that the rejection of the District-Committee should be imperative, and that there could be no appeal: but, unfortunately for their argument, neither of these is the case. The principle of receiving appeals is clearly recognised in the constant and uniform practice of the Conference. The ear of the Conference is ever open to the injured; and not a Conference passes but appeals, not only from public bodies, but from individuals, are received and decided upon. And then the Rule does not say anything equivalent to this,—that the rejection of the application by the District-Meeting shall be imperative, and that there shall be no appeal from its decision. All that is said is,—“that if it obtain the sanction of the District-Committee, it shall be referred to a Committee of the Conference.” Now, bearing in mind what has ever been the practice of the Conference, the only fair interpretation of the Rule is, that, if the District-Committee refuses to sanction an application, and the applying party rest satisfied with the decision, then the matter ends; but if the parties, whose suit has been rejected, consider themselves aggrieved, there remains for them the understood resource of an appeal to the Conference.

It is surprising that the complainants do not perceive that their reasonings, respecting the decision of the District-Committee on the organ-question, clash, most palpably, with the arguments they at other times use against the power of District-Committees. When they are objecting to the District-Committee, in its principal and leading character, they represent it as the mere creature of the Conference; originated, in the first instance, by its fiat, and then stripped, in 1797, so completely of all power, that it has nothing left to it but “a bare negative,” (which expression they receive in a sense that makes it just about nothing at all,) excepting in the single case of the trial of a Preacher. But when they turn to the Rule respecting organs, then this power of negation which District-Committees possess, turns out, after all, the most formidable power in the Connexion,—standing between the Conference and the Circuits, and forbidding them to come near to each other. In the first instance, they hold up the District-Committee as a mere scarecrow, of which the people have not the slightest cause to be afraid; in the next instance, they are seen approaching it with the most profound veneration, laying the power of the Conference prostrate at its feet, and sacrificing on its altar also the interests of the Circuits.

If we examine the concessions of 1797, which leave the negative, in all temporal matters, with the District-Committees, we find no mention made, either directly or indirectly, of an appeal from their deci-

sion to the Conference, any more than there is in the Rule on organs. The only mention of a reference to the Conference is in the Rule among the "Miscellaneous Regulations," respecting Districts, for inviting three Superintendents; and by the showing of those persons themselves, this has nothing to do with the temporal matters of the Connexion. On the principle, then, that there is no right to appeal unless the law expresses it, we are landed in the conclusion, that, however wrong the District-Committee might be, in putting its "negative" on any of the temporal matters which come before it, neither the Circuits nor the Conference have any means of redress. The division of a Circuit is one of the temporal matters on which the District-Committees have a "negative." Now, if the division of a Circuit should be ever so necessary, and the wish of the Circuit be ever so unanimous, if the District-Committee should say, "No,"—why then there is no help; it must be submitted to. It will perhaps be said, that this is supposing a most unlikely case to happen. After we have seen that the simple question of the introduction of an organ, in lieu of other kinds of musical instruments, has had the effect of throwing persons into such a panic as to cause them to cry out that the foundations are giving way, and that the whole goodly framework of Methodism is coming down,—no one must pretend to determine what shall not happen. But we will take another view of the subject, which, to some minds perhaps, may appear more probable. The power of negation which District-Meetings have on temporal matters, necessarily implies another power,—the power to sanction. If the District-Meeting does not put its "negative" on the question, it sanctions it, and passes it to the Conference for its final decision. Let us suppose, now, that, in the judgment of the friends generally, the division of a Circuit would be of most pernicious consequence; but the Superintendent and a few others, being eager to effect it, manage, by craft and manœuvre, to obtain a majority in its favour at the Quarterly-Meeting, and then the Superintendent, by his influence, induces the District-Committee to sanction it; what, I should like to know, would be the constitutional resource of the Circuit, providing that there is no appeal from the District-Committee? But, to advert again to the Rule on organs. Supposing that the District-Meeting, instead of rejecting the application from Leeds for an organ, had sanctioned it, and forwarded it with their recommendation to the Conference; and that the dissentients at Leeds had then appealed to the Conference against the decision of the District-Meeting; would the complainants have justified the Conference in refusing to listen to *their* appeal? Would not rather the Connexion have been made to resound again with exclamations against the tyranny of the Conference, in artfully placing one of its own Committees—the District-Committee—between itself and the people, as represented in their different local meetings, and thus making the inequitable vote of the District-Committee the reason for closing its ears against any application from the Circuit?

It is now, however, time to examine another ground on which those persons object to the appeal of the Trustees. We have seen how they have confounded the appeal to the Conference with the application to the District-Committee, and then urged that the *Rule* does not admit of it. Now we have to hear them conclude their argument, by maintaining that neither does the *subject* admit of appeal. And why does it not? Because, they say, appeals relate to *judicial* decisions; and, therefore, they have nothing to do with such a case as this. And so it seems, if the Conference were to alter this Rule, and all the others relating to "temporal matters," and should say, expressly, that the aggrieved party was to have the right of appeal, it would amount to just nothing at all: District-Committees do not, in settling their "temporal matters," proceed *judicially*; and therefore there cannot, in the nature of things, be any appeal from their decision. Let us look at this argument for a moment. "Appeals relate to *judicial* decisions." True; but do they relate to judicial decisions *only*? That is the question; for unless they relate to that class of decisions exclusively, this mighty argument amounts to mere words. Let us see, then, how the case stands. When I, in common with other householders, receive, from the proper officers, notice of the amount of my assessments for the year, I am at the same time informed, that, if I consider myself aggrieved, I have the right of *appeal*, and am informed when and where I am to exercise that right. Now, I ask, is the decision of a Surveyor of Taxes, against which I appeal, a *judicial* decision, any more than the decision of a District-Committee on the subject of an organ, or any other temporal matter whatever? From the draught of the Irish Freeholders' Bill, which has just appeared in the public papers, (1829,) I quote the following clause:—"The Assistant-Barrister may refuse the registry, if he see ground for so doing from defect of title, &c. If the applicant be rejected on the score of insufficiency of value, he may require a jury; and if they decide that the value is sufficient, the Assistant-Barrister must register the freehold. If the registry be refused on any other ground, the *appeal* lies to the Judge of the assize, at the next county assizes; who may, if he think fit, reverse the refusal of the Assistant-Barrister." Here we have a case very similar to that of the Trustees. The Trustees applied to the Conference for redress, the District-Committee having refused the privilege they claimed; and a person is here contemplated as having his claim rejected, and applying to a higher court for redress; and his application for redress is called an "appeal."

To conclude on this subject. It is a fundamental principle in politics, that where there is the power to make laws, there is the right to receive appeals from the officers and jurisdictions intrusted with their administration. This principle is fully recognised by the civil constitution under which we live. The House of Lords receives appeals from lower courts, although the Acts on which these courts have made their decisions may make no mention of such right of appeal; and it

ought not, therefore, to be objected against the Conference, which is intrusted with the making of such laws as a religious community requires, that it opens its ear to those who claim redress from what they regard as an unequal administration of those laws. In fact, the right of appeal to the Conference by aggrieved individuals, or collective bodies of Methodists, is one of those principles in the Methodist constitution which are most firmly established by immemorial usage.

Our inquiry into the constitution of Methodism, as settled by the Regulations of 1795 and 1797, has thus made it evident, that the system for which some parties now contend, under the name of the Methodism of 1797, is quite another thing,—a theory existing only in their own imagination; and which, if once practically adopted, would soon destroy that which has ever been a distinguishing characteristic of the Methodist body,—its *oneness*. If once the principle of the independence of the local meetings, in all local affairs, were brought into operation; were it admitted, as a settled point, that the District-Committee has no power to enter a Circuit, except to try a Preacher, or, at most, to offer counsel in Society affairs;—what, then, would be left in the constitution, to prevent any Circuit from throwing off the authority of the Conference; or even from renouncing Methodism itself, and introducing any other system, however dissimilar? What could the Preachers of the Circuits do, bound as they are by the Regulations of 1797? What could the Conference do? It would retain the legal right to appoint Preachers to the chapels; but who does not see, that, on such a principle, that right might be made of little worth? I call not in question the piety of the body. I hope the best things from the great mass of the people. But the question is not, What is the safeguard which Methodism has in the piety of the people? but, What would there then be left in the *Constitution* to prevent the breaking up of the body,—the disruption of the Societies? I answer, “Nothing;” and I stand not alone in this opinion. The inventors themselves of this new system which is now offered to us, as the Methodism of 1797, seem to be fully aware of the consequences of its adoption; for they oracularly warn the Conference, that if it do not pursue the course which they mark out, “its hold on the chapels will slide away, as the estate of an insolvent man passes into the hands of his creditors.”

To complete our investigation, we must take a view of,

III. THE CONSTITUTION OF METHODISM AS IT NOW APPEARS.

The first point here to be considered is, whether any change in the constitution has been effected since the extensive and formal modification which it underwent in 1795 and 1797? Some of those persons who think that the Conference, by sanctioning the claims set up for the Leeds Special District-Meeting, has violated the engagements which it entered into with the people at that period,—charge the Conference, moreover, with having long acted on the principle of covertly

and insidiously resuming the privileges which it conceded to the local meetings in 1797 ; and they say, that it is its success in acting on that system, which has emboldened it to attempt what they call an open violation of the constitution, by the interposition of the District-Committee in the local affairs of a Circuit. We have sufficiently exposed the misapprehensions of such persons on the subject of the jurisdiction of District-Committees ; and have proved that the Conference, in sanctioning the District-Committee, in the exercise of the power by which it controls the Society as well as the Preachers, and redresses the grievance, whatever it may be,—does, in fact, *maintain* the constitution, and not *violate* it ; and a further inquiry would show, that the charge of a secret undermining of the constitution is advanced against the Conference with as little reason as the other.*

It is not necessary, however, to go into lengthened details upon this point. A comprehensive glance at the subject is sufficient to make it apparent, that the whole course of Conference legislation since 1797 has been in the direction of further concessions to the people. At that time, as appears from the second head of its “Sundry Miscellaneous Regulations”—“As to Delegates,”—the Conference declined to admit laymen into District-Meetings, as well as into the Conference. Since then, however, it has arranged a plan by which the Circuit-Stewards are introduced into the District-Meetings, and take their share in the management of all the financial affairs of the District : while, in like manner, that of the public funds of the Connexion has been intrusted to the care of Mixed Committees ; in which the number of laymen is equal to that of Ministers. While all the great principles maintained by the Conference in 1797 have been preserved inviolate, there has been such an enlargement of the concessions which it then made, that laymen are now seen taking their full share in all the temporal and financial business of the Connexion.†

* I omit here a few paragraphs contained in the first edition of the Essay, relating to objections which were urged against the Conference in 1829, respecting the Liturgy, and the division of Circuits, and Leaders'-Meetings, as not especially applicable at the present time.

† In the year 1835, the Conference, moreover, introduced some disciplinary modifications in favour of the people. Additional protection was thrown around the members, for the purpose of shielding them from hasty and inconsiderate expulsion. It was then directed, that no sentence of expulsion should, for the future, be pronounced by any Superintendent in the *same Meeting* at which the trial has taken place ; but that the sentence should be deferred for *at least one week*. In difficult or doubtful cases, the Superintendent is further instructed, not to proceed to the actual sentence of expulsion, until he has sought information for his guidance from individual Leaders, or other experienced persons. Every case of proposed expulsion is also to be brought by the Superintendent before the weekly Meeting of the Preachers of the Circuit, that he may have the benefit of the counsel of his colleagues. And in a case of expulsion, where the party is dissatisfied it is provided that, as a summary mode of seeking redress, he shall have the privilege of a *Minor* District-Committee ; reserving to him the right of appeal to the full District-Committee, and from that to the Conference. Nor is the benefit of this arrangement at all diminished by its being extended to the Superintendent also, in case he be dissatisfied with the proceedings of the District-Meeting. The same

Having thus seen that the Conference has not been insidiously encroaching on the liberties of the people, but that, on the contrary, it has, by its own voluntary concessions, admitted a much greater degree of lay-interference in the management of Connexional affairs, it now becomes a fit subject for our consideration, whether the Constitution of Methodism, as settled by the regulations of 1795 and 1797, and rendered still more popular by the subsequent liberality of the Conference, shall be preserved, or the new and untried system which some persons now so strongly recommend shall be adopted in its stead.

There are two principal reasons to be adduced why this change should not be made:—

1. Because our present system properly recognises the pastoral office, and consistently maintains its scriptural authority; and,
2. Because it affords a sure guarantee for the security of the Methodistic rights and privileges of the whole Connexion.

1. To begin with the former of these reasons. There is at present so much misconception on the subject of the legitimate authority of the Christian Pastor, as to justify a brief examination of the subject in the light of holy writ.

One of the most familiar representations of the church which the New Testament affords, is that in which the church is spoken of as a flock, and Christ and the Ministers of the Gospel as its Pastors,—Christ the “great” or “chief Pastor,” and his ministering servants as Pastors in subordination to himself. The latter are enjoined faithfully to perform the duties of their office as under-Pastors; to which they are further stimulated by the promise, “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” (1 Peter v. 4.)

But what are the services which this relation is intended to represent Christ, and the Ministers of the Gospel, as performing for the church? This will be seen, in the first instance, in the meaning of the Greek word for “Pastor,” ποιμήν. The corresponding verb, ποιμαίνω, “to do the work,” or “perform the office of a Pastor,” is used by both sacred and profane authors, in the sense of “to rule,” as well as “to feed.” To give an instance from the New Testament of the use of the verb in the sense of ruling, or governing: In Matt. ii. 6, Bethlehem is thus addressed, “Out of thee shall come a Governor that shall *rule* (ποιμανεῖ) my people Israel.” So fully does this verb express the idea of government, that it is sometimes employed to denote “ruling with severity.” In three out of the four places in which it is found in

Conference of 1835 also enlarged the concession of 1797, by providing for the holding of a Circuit-Meeting, in the month of June, for the purpose of memorializing the Conference on any question of Connexional interest. The “Special Address of the Conference of 1835,” as far as relates to its explanations on existing Rules, and the various modifications then introduced, is given at length in Appendix D, at the end of this publication.

the Apocalypse, it is thus used. Take, as an instance, the first of these passages: "And he shall rule (*ποιμανεῖ*) them with a rod of iron." (Chap. ii. 27.) Here Christ, who is the speaker, addressing the angel of the church in Thyatira, declares, that "he that overcometh" shall, for the shepherd's crook, have a rod of iron; and with it he, in subordination to Himself, shall rule with such rigour over "the nations," that "as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers." In accordance with this use of the verb, the substantive *ποιμήν* is frequently so applied as to give prominence to the governing authority of the Pastor. In the Old Testament Kings are called Pastors; and in the Septuagint, the Hebrew word for "Pastor" (*רֹעֶה*) is often expressed by *ποιμήν*. Nor are Kings spoken of as Pastors merely with reference to their fostering care over the people. They are referred to in that character when guiding or ruling is intended, as well as feeding. This is the case, for instance, in 2 Sam. v. 2, and in the parallel passage in 1 Chron. xi. 2: "And the Lord thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed (*רָעָה*) my people Israel." In our English Bible, the Hebrew verb, in the latter passage, is rendered in the margin "rule," instead of "feed;" and in the Septuagint it is expressed by the Greek verb *ποιμαίνω*. Both the Greek and the Hebrew verbs are also used in the Old Testament to express the injurious exercise of pastoral authority; as in Micah v. 6: "And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword." In this passage the Hebrew verb rendered "waste," is *רָעָה*—for which *ποιμαίνω* is given by the Septuagint. In classical Greek writers, as well as in the sacred Scriptures, Kings are represented as sustaining the pastoral character. Homer frequently speaks of them as "Pastors of the people," *ποιμένες λαῶν*. Thus Nestor is styled, *ποιμήν λαῶν*, who is obeyed by the *σκηπτοῦχοι βασιλῆες*, "the sceptred Sovereigns" present in council, as well as by the "people;" (*Il.*, ii. 85;) and Agamemnon, in reference to matters in which the soldiers are concerned, is usually distinguished by the same appellation.

In the earlier ages of the world, when flocks and herds were the chief possessions, and a principal employment of mankind was to tend them, the familiar relation of a Pastor to his flock was frequently transferred, in a figure, to those who had to provide for and direct communities of men. And it is evident, from a consideration of the meaning of the Greek verb and substantive, and the corresponding Hebrew terms, that whenever this relation was thus metaphorically applied, the two acts of feeding and governing were intended to be expressed. That as the shepherd fed his flock, and drove them from one pasture to another, directing them and restraining them at his will, so they to whom the character was figuratively transferred were to nurture and govern the communities that were supposed to bear to them the relation of a flock.*

* Xenophon commences his "Institution of Cyrus" by comparing the authority of shepherds over their flocks, or of herdsmen over their cattle, with that which

The duties of the pastoral relation in general, whether literally or figuratively understood, are thus sufficiently manifest; and it will not, I presume, be necessary to argue, that Christ fills the whole pastoral office. There will be no question whether He governs as well as feeds the church. In one of the preceding quotations, He is represented as exercising pastoral rule over His people. It may, however, be necessary to extend our inquiry, for the purpose of ascertaining whether his Ministers fill the whole office, or if they are restricted to the one work of nurturing the flock.

Now, as it is apparent that to feed and to rule is the proper business of the pastoral office; that Christ is represented as the Pastor of the church, and his Ministers as Pastors under him; and that Christ undoubtedly fills the whole office;—it is but fair to conclude, that, unless the work of the Ministers of Christ is expressly limited to one function, they also, in subordination to Christ, have to exercise authority in the church, as well as to provide for its spiritual nurture. But does the New Testament contain any such limitation? It does not. On the contrary, the Ministers of Christ are recognised, in the most explicit manner, as filling the whole office; and upon them, also, the two-fold task connected with that office is most unequivocally and solemnly imposed.

The evidence first to be examined on this point is, of course, the original commission by which Christ formally invested His ministering servants with all the authority they possess. “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations,” (that is, “disciple all nations,” as Mr. Wesley has it,) “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.) The end of this commission most obviously is, that mankind may be brought under the influence of religion;—that the inhabitants of this sinful world may be prepared for the enjoyment of heaven. Now, if all this can be accomplished, without discipline, then there is not need for any government in the church; but if discipline be necessary, as well as instruction, in order to effect the comprehensive object of the commission, then its administration is intrusted to the stated and regular Preachers of the Gospel. Upon them is imposed not a part, merely, but the whole, of the task of evangelizing mankind, and of instrumentally making them meet “to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

rulers exercise over men: “All these flocks and herds seem more willing to obey their pastors (or keepers) than men their rulers. For they go where their pastors direct them, and they feed in any place whatsoever to which they may drive them, and they refrain from those places from which they are excluded. Besides, the produce which is derived from them they suffer their pastors to use, in what manner soever they may choose. And, truly, we have never noticed any flocks to rise up against their pastor so as not to have obeyed him, nor yet on any occasion not to have suffered him to use their produce. But flocks and herds are more untractable with all others than with those who govern them, and to whom they are useful and profitable.”

To take another view of this commission. Baptism is that rite by which persons are *admitted* into the church of Christ in general; and this rite Christ here expressly directs the *Ministers* of the Gospel to perform. They are thus to *receive persons into* the church; but is *exclusion from its communion* also a function of their office? That they are to do this, too, is put beyond all doubt by the same commission as recorded by John. (John xx. 21—23.) The conclusion of it in that Evangelist runs thus: “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” Mr. Wesley, commenting on this passage, shows that the power here imparted is,—“First, a power of declaring with authority the Christian terms of pardon, &c.; and, secondly, a power of inflicting and remitting ecclesiastical censures; that is, of *excluding from*, and *re-admitting into*, a Christian congregation.” No one, I imagine, will argue that Christ communicated this power to none but the Apostles; because such argument would prove a great deal too much. It would prove, just as conclusively, that none except the Apostles were commissioned to preach. The same persons whom Christ sets apart to the work of the ministry, He appoints to discipline the church; and we must therefore conclude, either that this commission was altogether confined to the Apostles, or admit that it empowers the Ministers of Christ, in general, to exercise discipline in the church, as well as to provide for its spiritual nourishment.

The passage in the first Epistle general of Peter—to which an allusion has already been made—may be very properly examined in immediate connexion with this original commission.* In the first verse the Apostle says, “The Elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an Elder.” That he is here addressing Christian Ministers, is evident from the word which he uses. The Greek word rendered, in our translation of the New Testament, “Elder,” is *πρεσβύτερος*, the meaning of which word is made evident by the fact, that it was early adopted, in different forms, into other languages, as the appellation designating the ministerial character. Our own word “Priest” is a contraction of “Presbyter,” *πρεσβύτερος*. That they are Ministers whom the Apostle addresses, appears again from this circumstance,—he calls himself *συμπρεσβύτερος*, “a fellow-Presbyter,” or “fellow-Elder.” Nor is this the only instance where an Apostle gives himself the same appellation: John calls himself an “Elder” at the commencement of his last two Epistles.

In the second verse he gives those Presbyters or Elders the follow-

* “The Elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an Elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

“Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

“And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” (1 Peter v. 1—4.)

ing charge: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." Here we have the church spoken of as a "flock;" and the Ministers of Christ are directed to feed it. The word "feed" is in the original *ποιμαίνω*, the meaning of which we have previously investigated; and the point to be now ascertained is, whether the Apostle here uses it in the sense of feeding only. This restricted meaning cannot be admitted on any sound principle of interpretation. As he speaks of the church as a flock; as the work of a Pastor is both to feed and govern the flock; and as the verb *ποιμαίνω* includes the two senses of feeding and governing; we are bound to admit that the Apostle here imposes on Christian Ministers the whole work of a Pastor, and directs them to both feed and regulate the flock over which they are appointed to watch. Our translators here, as in some other instances, have not been able to give the entire meaning of the Apostle. There is no verb in the modern English language equivalent to *ποιμαίνω*. "To feed" is correct as far as it goes; but governing must be connected with feeding, to express its full sense. Were it allowable to employ the word "shepherdise," found in some old authors, or to apply the term "shepherd" as a verb, which is thus used as a provincialism in some grazing districts,—the full meaning of the Greek verb would thus be given. "To shepherdise," or "to shepherd," the flock, is to do for it the whole work of a Pastor.

Having enjoined on the Ministers of Christ that they perform the duties of the pastoral office, the Apostle then urges them to act from *right motives*. He tells them that they are to take the oversight of the flock *willingly, &c.* The word rendered "taking the oversight," is the present participle of *ἐπισκοπέω*, from which is derived *ἐπίσκοπος*, "Bishop;" and his meaning is, that they are to discharge the duties of the office of Bishop willingly, &c. What that office is will shortly be seen. The verb *ἐπισκοπέω* means "to oversee, to superintend;" and the substantive *ἐπίσκοπος* possesses, in the New Testament, a corresponding meaning. The Christian Bishop is the superintendent—the overseer of the church. The kind of oversight with which he is charged, is clearly shown by the Apostle, in that description of the necessary qualifications of a Bishop which he gives to Timothy. The Bishop, *ἐπίσκοπος*, must be "one that ruleth well, his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.) From hence it appears, that the Christian Bishop is to oversee the church, as a man oversees his own family: that as a man provides for his family, and authoritatively directs and controls it, so is the Bishop to take care of the church; providing for its spiritual wants, and directing and disciplining it for its good. What importance the Apostle attaches to the ruling department which the Bishop has to fill, is seen in his insisting on an ability to rule, as an indispensable qualification in a Bishop. His argument amounts to this,—that what-

ever piety a man may have, or however capable of teaching he may be, if he is not able to rule, he is not fully fitted for the office of Bishop. To regulate the church by wholesome discipline, is thus as much the work of a Christian Bishop, or overseer, as to instruct and nourish it by the Word and Sacraments.*

In directing Christian Ministers to oversee the flock of God, or to perform, in respect to it, the work of a Bishop or overseer, the Apostle is thus evidently repeating the charge which he had just addressed to them,—to feed the flock of God; or, in other words, to do for it the whole work of a Pastor. And this meaning the Apostle's language carries on the surface. It is plain that, in the latter part of the verse, he insists on their doing the work which he enjoins upon them from right motives. Unless then the latter expression respecting their taking the oversight of the flock, is to be regarded as tantamount to the one immediately preceding, respecting their doing for it the work of the pastoral office,—we shall make the Apostle's charge on the subject of right motives to refer exclusively to the work of overseeing the flock: and, for anything the Apostle says, Christian Ministers would be left at liberty to do the pastoral work (that is, on the supposition that it is different from the work of overseeing the flock) from wrong motives, or from no motives at all.

But what are the motives on which the Apostle insists? He tells the Ministers of Christ, that they are to perform the pastoral work—to oversee the flock of God, “not by constraint,” as though it were an irksome and disagreeable task; nor “for filthy lucre,”—that, although the church is under obligation to provide for them a competent support, they are not therefore to relinquish that secular business by which they might obtain their subsistence; and obtrude themselves into the ministry, merely that they may turn the sacred office to pecuniary advantage. They are to act from higher motives. They are to do the work imposed upon them, “willingly”—with “a ready mind.” They are willingly and cheerfully to sacrifice their worldly prospects and their ease; and from a zeal for God's glory, and from a love for the souls of men, they are to devote themselves to the sacred work.

In the third verse the Apostle marks out the *manner* in which Christian Ministers are to perform their task. “Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” Some persons suppose that the Apostle here prohibits Ministers from exercising any kind of authority; but how greatly they err who judge thus, it will not be difficult to make appear. The original word for “being lords,” is *κατακυριεύοντες*. Now *κυριεύω* sometimes expresses absolute and even tyrannical authority. It is used in the Epistle to the Romans to denote the power of death, and, in the same connexion,

* “*Peculiariter autem olim dicebantur ἐπίσκοποι, sacri gregis inspectores, qui verbo et gubernationi præerant, quique quasi speculatores in doctrinam et mores commissi gregis inquirebant: ut Act. xx. 28, et Phil. c. i., iidem qui et Presbyteri.*” (Scapula.)

it is employed to express the tyranny of sin over the human mind. (Rom. vi. 9, 14.) With *κατά* prefixed, the meaning of the verb is strengthened. It occurs in the New Testament only once where it has not reference to Christian Ministers; and there it expresses an authority or power exercised exclusively in inflicting suffering. The passage to which I refer is in the Acts of the Apostles, (chap. xix. 16,) where the demoniac is spoken of as assaulting the seven sons of Sceva. *Κατακυριεύω* is one of the verbs employed to express his entire mastery over them, in wounding them and stripping them naked, and putting them to flight. The meaning of the Apostle in the passage under consideration, then, is—that the Christian Pastor is not to govern his flock in a despotic manner. In other words, the Apostle forbids, not *pastoral* authority, but *lordly, imperious* rule; and his object in doing this, is to put them on their guard, lest the authority which belongs to their office should degenerate into that which is foreign to its character. Two things appear to be included:—Pastors are to regulate the flock,—1. Not according to their own arbitrary will or caprice, but by administering the doctrine and discipline of Christ: and, 2. They are to do this, not as “lords,” but as Pastors, who, while they direct and control the flock, are at the same time its servants for Christ’s sake. They are not to exercise their authority in a haughty and imperious spirit, but with all that humility, and lowly-mindedness, and self-denial, which will at the same time make them the patterns of the flock. We must thus interpret the language of the Apostle, or make him contradict himself. In the preceding verse, he recognises the Ministers of Christ, as invested with the pastoral office; as having its work to perform, and as armed with its authority: and he cannot, therefore, immediately, and with the same breath, deny to them all rule—all authority whatever.

Having thus spoken of Christian Ministers as charged with the oversight of the flock of God,—as having to perform, in respect to it, the *work* of the pastoral office, by nourishing it with the word and sacraments, and regulating it, in the spirit of meekness, by the enforcement of the laws of Christ; having dwelt on the *motives* which are to actuate them in their work, and the *manner* in which they are to fill the sacred office with which they are invested;—the Apostle then encourages them to be faithful, by assuring them, that when the Chief Pastor of the flock shall appear, they, its under-Pastors, shall receive their *reward*—an incorruptible crown of glory.

We may now turn our attention to a class of passages which explicitly recognise the two-fold work of feeding and regulating the church; and which represent the same persons as having the whole task to perform.

The Apostle, in his directions to Timothy, says, “Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.” (1 Tim. v. 17.) This passage is understood by some, as though it taught that, in the primitive church,

there were some Presbyters or Elders whose business was to rule, and others to whom was committed the work of teaching: but if such a doctrine has nothing better to support it than this passage, it would seem to rest on a precarious foundation. In the first instance, the Apostle says, "Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour." Two things here are evident:—First, that he institutes a comparison between those of whom he speaks, and either some other Elders, or their own selves viewed in some other light; and, secondly, that those with whom the comparison is instituted, whether it is with themselves, or some other Elders, are worthy of honour for something else besides ruling well. The Apostle must have in view some others, or themselves in some other respect, to whom *honour*, simply, is due; or his mention of *double* honour as the desert of those who rule well would be absurd. Is it then to be understood that he makes a distinction between Elders who teach only, and Elders who only rule; and that he says that the teaching Elder is certainly deserving of honour, but that the ruling Elder who fills his department properly, is worthy of double honour? The Apostle does, certainly, as we have before seen, lay great stress on government, and make an ability to rule an indispensable qualification in a Christian Minister; but he cannot here mean that ruling is of two-fold more moment than teaching. If the Apostle is not comparing them with other Elders who had only to teach, is he then comparing them with other ruling Elders? On the supposition that he is, he must be comparing them with those who rule ill—there being no medium between ruling well and ruling ill; and what he means will, therefore, be this—that they who rule ill are worthy of honour, but that they who rule well are deserving of double honour. I presume, however, that even those who are the most anxious to strip the Ministers of Christ of that authority with which their Divine Master has invested them, will not say that this is the Apostle's meaning. The only remaining principle of interpretation then is, that he is comparing them, as good rulers, with their own selves in some other service which they render to the church. What then can that other service be? If we look at those passages only which we have already noticed, and see, that, by their original commission, Christian Ministers are empowered both to teach and discipline the church; and that, in Peter, they are addressed under this very appellation of "Elders," and as having this two-fold work of ruling and teaching to perform; the fair conclusion appears to be, that the Apostle, in the instance before us, has evidently his eye on those Ministers who are worthy of honour for their faithful preaching; and is saying, in effect, that if, in addition to this, they rule well too, they are "worthy of double honour."

But the Apostle immediately adds, "especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." "Those," says Dr. Clarke, "who not only preach publicly, but *instruct privately, catechise*," &c. The whole passage may be paraphrased thus:—"Those Ministers who faithfully

perform their work of teaching are to be regarded as deserving of honour, but if they rule well too, let them be counted worthy of double honour; and more especially if, in their teaching department, they put forth all their strength, and laboriously exert themselves in every way, to communicate religious instruction to all under their care." This distinction between working and labouring—between more or less vigorous exertions on the part of faithful Ministers—is not fanciful. The Apostle is found making such distinctions in other parts of his writings. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, speaking of Timotheus, he says, "He worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do." (1 Cor. xvi. 10.) Here the business of the ministry is called "a work," *ἔργον*, and the verb used is *ἐργάζομαι*, "to work;" but in several instances he expresses himself as in the passage under consideration, and speaks of labouring, of toiling, of being spent with labour; for such is the meaning of *κοπιᾶω*. Then again, the Apostle sometimes so expressly and manifestly institutes a comparison between faithful Ministers, in respect to their being more or less laborious, that not a doubt can be entertained as to his meaning. In the fifteenth chapter of the same Epistle to the Corinthians, he compares himself with the other Apostles; and maintains, that, in the work of preaching the Gospel, he "laboured more abundantly than they all." (1 Cor. xv. 10.) And again, when vindicating his claims against those who sought to depreciate him, he asks, "Are they Ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool.) I am more: in labours more abundant," &c. (2 Cor. xi. 23.) Whether in these passages he represents those with whom he compares himself as working or labouring, it matters not: he most unquestionably maintains, that, however much they did, he did more than they. It is thus evident, that the interpretation which I give of the passage under consideration, makes the Apostle speak like himself:—The Minister who faithfully preaches the Gospel is worthy of honour,—but if he rule well too, he is worthy of double honour; especially if he exceeds others in his ministerial labours as the Apostle exceeded his colleagues, and other Ministers—labouring more abundantly than they all. And—with respectful deference to our brethren of another section of the Christian church, who think otherwise—this interpretation, I conceive, must be adopted to make sense of the passage viewed as a whole.

The injunction addressed by the Apostle to Timothy, of which we have thus disposed, is evidently a repetition of one which he had before given to the Thessalonians,—“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.” (1 Thess. v. 12, 13.) Dr. Clarke very properly observes, that the persons here referred to “were then actually employed in the work of God. They were all admonishers, teachers, and instructors of the people, devoting their time and talents to this important work.” The first coincidence which strikes us, between this passage and the

one in Timothy, which we have just examined, is that, in both instances, the persons spoken of are represented as *labouring* in the *work* of the ministry. Further, in both passages, they are represented as ruling the church, as well as teaching it; for the word rendered in Timothy “rule,” and the word here translated “are over,” are participles of the same verb. And then again, the Apostle here says, that they are to be “esteemed very highly,”—an expression appearing to be about equivalent to the “double honour,” of which he represents them as being worthy, in the corresponding injunction to Timothy.

This passage from the Epistle to the Thessalonians is thus interesting for two reasons. It clearly marks out the twofold work of feeding and ruling the flock, and shows that the whole is to be performed by the same persons; and it throws light on what I regard as the *misunderstood* passage in Timothy, and tends to confirm that which I adopt as the scriptural view. But some, perhaps, may urge, that these passages do not speak of *ruling* at all; that what the Apostle intends is, that Ministers *preside* over the church. This interpretation will not, however, alter the question. That passage in Timothy in which the Apostle speaks of a man’s ruling his own house, settles, beyond all controversy, what is the kind of *presidency* with which he invests the Ministers of Christ. He uses the same word there, as in these instances; so that, unless it can be proved, that a man has no authority to *rule* his own family—that he merely presides over it as chairman,—the Apostle represents the Ministers of Christ as exercising over the church what is strictly pastoral rule and authority.

We find, in the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, another passage or two of this class which deserve particular consideration. In the seventh verse, the Apostle enjoins, “Remember them who have the rule over you,” or, “Remember your rulers,” as Macknight renders it, “who have spoken to you the word of God.” Here, again, the same coincidence presents itself,—those who rule the church are the same who nurture it with the word of life. Whether the Apostle here speaks of their deceased Pastors, or of those who were then filling the pastoral office among them, is of no moment in the inquiry which we are now instituting. In either case, the whole work of feeding and governing the flock was performed by the same persons.

In the seventeenth verse, the injunction is repeated:—“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief.” The language of the Apostle in these passages is so express, as almost to exclude the possibility of misapprehension. But it is said that *ἡγούμενος*, the word here used in the plural number, means “a guide or leader;” and therefore that we are called to obey or submit to our Pastors, in that character only, and not as “rulers.” That the word has that sense is true; and it may be

rendered so here, provided that we are to understand not guides merely, but those who rule as well as conduct. The Apostle must certainly be speaking of those who have authority to enforce their directions, or his language would be inappropriate. "Obey," says he, "them that have the rule over you." If he had been speaking of those who were mere guides, would not his language have been at variance with the ordinary forms of speech? We do not speak of *obeying* but of *following* a guide. To speak of obeying one who is a ruler as well as guide is, however, correct. The second injunction in this passage, "and submit yourselves," is equally strong. The original word for "submit" is *ὑπαίκω*, which occurs only this once in the New Testament; but it is employed by profane writers in the sense of yielding or giving way to. It is used to denote such a submission as the Apostle could not possibly claim for any but those who are rulers. If he speaks of guides, it is of such guides as are armed with a spiritual authority to coerce those whom they teach, by such a discipline as the genius of Christ's kingdom admits.

This view of the Apostle's meaning is confirmed by Mr. Wesley. In his note on the passage, he says on the former part,—"'Obey them that have the rule over you,'—the word *implies also* 'that lead or guide you,'"—that is, that over and above the proper sense of the word which our translators give, it includes the idea of leading or guiding. On the next part of the Apostle's charge, "and submit yourselves," he says, "Give up (not your conscience or judgment, but) your own will in things purely indifferent." The meaning which he here briefly expresses, he develops more fully in his sermon on the same passage, entitled "On Obedience to Pastors." He there prefers to render the word "guides," rather than "rulers;" but it is for the reason that he regards the Apostle as especially intending to inculcate the truth, that our spiritual *guides* are those who are appointed to *rule* over us, and whom we are therefore bound to *obey*;—that not one class of men are appointed to guide, and another class to rule and feed the church, but that they who perform the one function are also to exercise the other. In this sermon Mr. Wesley expresses, more at length, his views of the extent of that obedience to Pastors on which the Apostle insists. He argues that it is not to be limited to those things which are enjoined of God; for when our Pastors enforce those on us, and we do them, we obey God rather than our Pastors: and he therefore maintains, that obedience to Pastors properly consists in submitting to them in all indifferent things whatever; doing, or leaving undone, anything of an indifferent nature as they direct. And this extensive obedience, he argues, it is the duty of every Christian to yield to his Pastor. As loud professions of regard for Mr. Wesley's opinions and measures are now made by certain parties, his opinion of those who disregard pastoral authority ought to secure attention. Having lamented that there are so many who are supposed to be good Christians, who do not even dream that there is such a duty as that of obedience to

Pastors, he says, "And yet there is not a more express command either in the Old or New Testament. No words can be more clear and plain,—no command more direct and positive. Therefore, certainly, none who receive the Scripture as the word of God, can live in the habitual breach of this, and plead innocence. Such an instance of wilful, or at least careless, disobedience, must grieve the Holy Spirit of God. It cannot but hinder the grace of God from having its full effect upon the heart. It is not improbable, that this very disobedience may be one cause of the deadness of many souls; one reason of their not receiving those blessings which they seek with some degree of sincerity." He continues to argue in the same strain at considerable length, and then concludes thus:—"Meantime, be assured of one thing: The more conscientiously you obey your spiritual guides, the more powerfully will God apply the word which they speak in His name to your heart: the more plentifully will He water what is spoken with the dew of His blessing: and the more proofs will you have,—it is not only they that speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaketh in them."

There yet remains for consideration a numerous class of scriptures, which expressly and chiefly dwell on the power of Ministers to order and enforce discipline on the church, in general, and exhibit the exercise of that power under various circumstances. We must confine ourselves, however, to a selection from this class.

In the concluding verses of the fourth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle threatens them with what he will do unless they amend. Mr. Benson thus comments on the last verse:—"Shall I come to you with a *rod*?' To chastise by the exercise of my apostolic power? Will you, by persisting in your dissensions and disorders, compel me to come in this spirit, and for this purpose?—'Or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?' commending and comforting, instead of chastising? Will you amend your ways, and reform what is amiss, that I may be kind and gentle towards you?" Such was the manner in which the Apostle asserted his authority, after he had expostulated with them for listening to those insinuations against him which his enemies had been endeavouring to infuse into their minds.

In the Second Epistle, the Apostle renews the subject, and occupies the greater part of the tenth chapter in asserting the authority with which he was invested, and threatening his enemies with a convincing practical display of his power when he should visit Corinth; assuring them that they should prove he was not formidable in word only, when at a distance, but in *deed* also, when present with them.

In concluding the epistle, he tells the Corinthians, that the design of his writing to them is, that he might, by friendly expostulation and warning, effect in them the amendment which he desired; "lest," he says, "being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction." (Chap. xiii. 10.)

In his First Epistle to Timothy, the Apostle tells him that he had delivered Hymenæus and Alexander to Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme. (Chap. i. 20.) Here we have the Apostle not *talking*, merely, of his power, but *exercising* it. These persons had disgraced the Christian profession, and had fallen into open sin,—and the Apostle enforced the discipline of the church, and inflicted on them the terrible punishment which he mentions.

With this passage may be connected Rev. ii. 12—15. Christ there tells the Pastor of the church at Pergamos, whom He addresses as its angel or messenger, that He had this against him,—that he kept in the church those who had fallen into the sinful errors of Balaam, and of the Nicolaitanes. But how could Christ blame and threaten the *Pastor*, because immoral persons were allowed to remain in the church, unless it was *his* duty to put them away? This passage clearly shows that, whether or not the delivering of immoral persons to Satan was a power peculiar to the Apostles, or exercised only by their appointment,—the expulsion of such individuals from the church was as much the business of the *ordinary* Pastor as of the Apostles; the power to exclude immoral persons being common to all who fill the pastoral office.

In the tenth and eleventh verses of the last chapter of the Epistle to Titus, the Apostle directs him to reject (that is, to deny any more place among them) a man who is a heretic, and who will not listen to admonition. This passage deserves particular consideration; because, while it marks out the persons who are to enforce discipline, it likewise fixes a mark of reprobation on a line of conduct which some, in every age of the church, have been too ready to pursue. The offender spoken of is a “heretic.” Mr. Wesley says, “This is the only place in the whole Scripture where this word *heretic* occurs; and here it evidently means a man that obstinately persists in contending ‘about foolish questions,’ and thereby occasions strife and animosities, schisms and parties, in the church. This, and this alone, is an heretic in the Scripture sense.” Mr. Benson thus comments on the passage: “Avoid, and declare him” (the heretic) “unfit to be any longer looked upon as a member of your community, *knowing* that such a one who is so fond of his own darling notions, that he will ruin the peace of the church, and will not submit to thy remonstrances, and those of the wiser and better part of the society, *is subverted, or perverted*, as ἐξέστραπται may be properly rendered; *and sinneth* in making such obstinate efforts to diffuse his notions, and form a party to himself: *being condemned of himself*,—convinced in his own conscience that he acts wrong, as he cannot but see it to be evil to cause strife, animosity, contention, and disunion among those that fear God, and were, before he thus troubled them, united in Christian love.” The man who thus persists in disturbing the peace of the church, whatever may be the recommendations he possesses, the Apostle pronounces to be unfit for its communion; and he directs Titus, a Minister, to effect his separation.

Another passage from the Apocalypse may be here noticed. Christ tells the Pastor of the church at Thyatira, (chap. ii. 20,) that he had a few things against him too; one of which was, that he suffered the woman Jezebel to lead the servants of Christ astray by her false teaching. It must be evident to all who reflect, that Christ could never have censured him for this, unless it was his duty to silence false and improper teachers.

Such is the teaching of the New Testament respecting the authority of the Ministers of Christ. Christ has appointed them as *Pastors* over the church; and has committed to them power to discipline, as well as *feed*, the flock. There are, however, certain passages brought forward with a view to show, that the government of the church is not vested in its *Pastors*, but in the *church* itself; that its laws are to be made by or with the consent of the *whole church*; and that they are to be administered also, not by its *Pastor* or *Pastors*, but by the *whole church*, or by a *deputation* of its members representing the interests and opinions of the *whole*.

That passage in the twentieth chapter of Matthew, verses 25, 26, where the Saviour is found correcting the ambitious views of two of his disciples, is produced as a proof that He has forbidden His Ministers to exercise all authority whatever. If Christ, in thus denying power to His Apostles, had expressed Himself in general terms, there might have been some shadow of a reason for such an interpretation of His words; but He describes so particularly the authority which He means, as to make it apparent that He is not prohibiting power in general, but only one kind of authority or dominion,—namely, such as the Princes of the Gentiles exercise. What that is, none need be at a loss to know, who are at all acquainted with the history and manners of the East. Despotism is there the prevailing form of government. The Eastern Sovereigns reign in the most arbitrary manner; their will is the law; and the lives of their subjects are entirely dependent on their caprice. The words themselves, which the Saviour uses, are sufficiently indicative of the power which He intends. The word rendered “exercise dominion” is *κατακυριεύουσιν*, the same verb which we have examined in 1 Peter v. 3. The term translated “exercise authority” is *κατεξουσιάζουσιν*. And good critics are not wanting, who understand these words as implying not merely despotic, but oppressive, authority.*

* *Nec est simpliciter dominantur, sed κατακυριεύουσι, dominantur in eas, sive adversus eas. Frequenter enim ea præpositio in malum sonat, quod Tyranni populi malo gerant principatum.*

Potestatem exercent *κατεξουσιάζουσιν αὐτῶν*, i. e. Jus, sive auctoritatem, exercent. Et præpositio similiter in partem malam sonat, indicans eam potestatem esse tyrannicam et cum malo parentium esse conjunctam. (Erasmus.)

Ἐξουσιάζειν (potestatem exercere) idem est quod κυριεύειν, (dominari,) pro lubitu non ex usu parentium imperare; quomodo ἐξουσιάζοντας (imperiose agentes in populum) sumitur et in Græco Nehemiæ v. 15. (Grotius.)

Κατεξουσιάζειν non est simpliciter habere potestatem, sed potestate uti tyrannice adversus subditos, et, sicuti explicat Theophylactus, ἐξουσιασικῶς καὶ τυραννικῶς προσφέρεισθαι. (Casaubonus.)

Not, however, to dwell on the intensive effect of the preposition *κατά*: The two verbs without the preposition, as they are found in the parallel passage in Luke xxii. 25, sufficiently describe the power which the Saviour prohibits. It is the exercise of that power which is despotic, and has for its object, not so much the welfare of the governed, as the personal gratification and selfish aims of him by whom it is exercised. Nor is this view of the meaning of the Saviour affected by the consideration, that in Luke's Gospel He says, the persons of whom He speaks are called "benefactors." To the present day, flattery loads the Monarchs of the East with the most extravagant, and sometimes the most impious, appellations; and the title of "benefactors" is to be traced to that source. Mr. Wesley, in commenting on the passage, says, "They that exercise the most arbitrary authority over them, have from their flatterers the vain title of 'benefactors.'" A number of instances are produced by Grotius, which show that this was the common appellation of the pagan Princes, with whom the Jews were best acquainted. Judea was at that period under the Roman yoke; and Philo gives to Caligula, who ascended the imperial throne soon after our Lord's crucifixion, the titles of "benefactor," and "saviour;" although, as every smatterer in history knows, he was one of the greatest monsters of wickedness and cruelty that ever disgraced human nature.

A consideration of the occasion on which this prohibition was given, will tend to confirm the view we have taken of the power which is intended. The Apostles were as yet labouring under a false impression as to the nature of that kingdom which their Master was about to establish. They imagined that it would be like the kingdoms of this world; and the object of the two was to attain the very highest places of dignity and power which its subjects could enjoy. Of course their views of government would accord with that which universally prevailed in the East, and with which alone they were acquainted; namely, despotic government,—government which was too often exercised to the injury of the subject. Pontius Pilate was then the Roman Governor of Judæa; and the example of princely splendour and power which he exhibited was before their eyes, while contemplating those imaginary stations in their Master's kingdom, which they were solicitous to obtain. Although they might design to use their power well, yet it was thus most certainly princely, despotic power which they had in view. Now the object of Christ was simply to correct the false views of the Apostles; to teach them that His kingdom was altogether different from that which they contemplated; that the glory which it would exhibit would be a moral glory,—not the pomp and splendour of earthly kingdoms; and that greatness in His kingdom would not consist in ruling with princely, arbitrary power, for their own ease and gratification; but would consist rather in denying themselves, in submitting to any hardships or privations, so that they might promote the good of others. Having thus ascertained what kind of authority it

was which the Apostles sought, and the Saviour denied to them, it may be asked, What countenance can this passage be supposed to afford to the opinion in support of which it is adduced? Must it follow, because Christ's kingdom does not admit of princely rule, that it therefore denies to the Minister of the Gospel the exercise of spiritual pastoral authority? that because the Christian Pastor must not enforce upon the people his own will as law, for his own personal gratification, he is not to discipline them according to the law of Christ, for their own spiritual benefit? Here, as in Peter, while the one kind of power is denied to Christian Ministers, they are, undoubtedly, left in the undisturbed exercise of the other. And this interpretation is confirmed by our Saviour's concluding words, which have been overlooked by those who have brought forward the passage for the purpose I have stated. Having denied to the Apostles such power as the Princes of the Gentiles exercise,—and having directed that whosoever would be great among them should be their minister, that whosoever would be chief among them should be their servant,—He then adds, “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” From the manner in which He thus associates Himself with the Apostles, while denying power to them, and insisting that they must serve, it is evident that this passage might just as well be adduced to prove, that Christ denied all power whatever to Himself, as well as to them. This, however, would be proving too much even for those to whose interpretation of the Saviour's meaning I object; and we must therefore adopt the conclusion, that, for anything this passage shows to the contrary, the Ministers of Christ have, as really and truly, a pastoral authority over those whom they serve in the Gospel, as Christ Himself was the Lord and Master of His disciples, at the very instant when He was washing their feet.

To equally little purpose is Matt. xxiii. 8, quoted, where Christ prohibits His disciples from being called “Rabbi,” for the reason that He is their “Master:” “But be not ye called Rabbi; for One is your Master, even Christ.” This Syriac term “Rabbi” was used among the Jews as a kind of academical distinction, (nearly corresponding with our term “Doctor,”) conferred on those who had signalized themselves by their learning.* The Greek word, here used as an equivalent to it, is *καθηγητής*, the meaning of which is a “Teacher,” or “Master.” If, then, the Saviour's prohibition is to be understood in the unqualified sense for which some contend, it proves that Ministers are neither to *teach* nor *rule*,—that they have no official duties whatever. It is not, then, teaching or ruling itself which is here prohibited, but a certain authoritative mode of enforcing their views. I will give the meaning of the passage in the words of Mr. Wesley. Speaking of those Jewish Doctors, he says, that they required their disciples,

* See Campbell's Preliminary Dissertations, part ii., diss. 7.

“1. To believe implicitly what they affirmed, without asking any farther reason. 2. To obey implicitly what they enjoined, without seeking farther authority. Our Lord, therefore, by forbidding us either to give or receive the title of Rabbi, Master, or Father, forbids us either to receive any such reverence, or to pay any such to any but God.” For anything, then, that this passage says to the contrary, the Ministers of Christ have authority both to teach and to rule, in the spirit of the Gospel.

The appointment of an Apostle to fill the place of Judas (Acts i. 15—26) is sometimes adduced as a proof that the government of the church is intrusted to the church itself—to the *whole* church. Let us examine the scriptural narrative of the transaction. We commence with the supposition that the One hundred and twenty individuals were the *whole* church. Who was it that proposed the measure? On the principle that the government of the church is vested in the church itself, the proposition ought to have come from that quarter; but instead of this having been actually the case, the subject was introduced by the Apostle Peter. And he did not propose it as a question which admitted of discussion, as to whether the measure should be adopted or not: he tells the assembly, at once, that the thing “must” be done. One of two conclusions seems to follow from this,—either that the government of the church is not in the church itself, or that Peter strangely forgot himself in dictating, as he did, to those whom he ought to have obeyed, rather than commanded. In the next place, “they appointed two.” Who appointed the two? Why may we not suppose that the Apostles nominated them? It may perhaps be said, that the Apostles are not mentioned; and that therefore the pronoun “they” must refer to the one hundred and twenty. We pass on then.—It follows—“they prayed.” Who prayed? I suppose we shall be told again, the whole church. We again proceed.—In the next instance, the narrative says, “they gave forth their lots.” The question was not decided by ballot, or by vote, but by the lot. The names of the two candidates were put into an urn: then into another urn were cast two scrolls,—one blank, and on the other the word “Apostle.” Having done this, one was drawn out of each urn. If the lot for Justus was taken out, the blank lot was drawn out of the other, and thus the lot for Matthias, and the lot on which the word “Apostle” was written, were left in the two urns; or, if the lot for Matthias was drawn out, then the lot with “Apostle” on it was drawn from the other, and Justus and the blank remained in the urns. The name which was either taken out, or left in along with the scroll inscribed “Apostle,” was that of the successful candidate: and that, we are told, was Matthias.* Well then, “they” thus “gave forth their lots.” Who did? We are told that the pronoun “they” refers to the one hundred and twenty: and so the whole one hundred and twenty wrote the names, and put

* Grotius in loc.

them into the urns; and the whole one hundred and twenty put their hands into the urns, and drew out the lots! To adhere rigidly to the letter of the narrative, would thus lead us into absurdity. It is certain the business could not be transacted by the whole one hundred and twenty, but by only a few of them. The most probable conclusion is, that as it was an Apostle who introduced the business, it was altogether managed by the Apostles; in the presence, and with the approbation, of the whole assembly.

But after all, was this one hundred and twenty really the *whole* church? We are to bear in mind, that, at that period, no particular church had been founded in any place, having its ordinary Pastor and other subordinate officers. The Apostles and their coadjutors had not then opened their commission; but were waiting in Jerusalem, according to the direction of their Lord, for the promise of the Spirit—the pentecostal baptism. The church was, therefore, as yet, only in its embryo state; and was strictly *one*, under the sole management of the Apostles, and other extraordinary officers. Did then the one hundred and twenty comprise the *whole* church? Most certainly not. The risen Saviour had been seen only a few days before by “above five hundred brethren at once.” (1 Cor. xv. 6.) The one hundred and twenty were then only *part* of the church. Mr. Benson seems to adopt the opinion of Dr. Lightfoot, as to who those were. He says, “Dr. Lightfoot reckons, that the eleven Apostles, the seventy disciples, and about thirty-nine more, all of Christ’s own kindred, country, and company, made up this one hundred and twenty; and that these were a sort of synod, or congregation of Ministers, a standing Presbytery, (chap. iv. 23,) to whom none of the rest durst join themselves; (chap. v. 13;) and that they continued together till the persecution at Stephen’s death dispersed them all but the Apostles. (Chap. viii. 1.) But he thinks that, besides these, there were many hundreds, if not thousands, in Jerusalem at this time who believed; and indeed we read of many who believed on Him there, but durst not confess Him.” That the one hundred and twenty were not chiefly Jews of Jerusalem, but that they were from Galilee,—the country where our Lord had been brought up,—where He had commenced His public ministry,—where His relatives dwelt,—and which was the native country of His Apostles,—appears highly probable from the following consideration:—The inspired historian, having informed us that Matthias, the successful candidate, was numbered with the eleven Apostles, immediately proceeds to tell us, that “when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.” Whoever examines the whole narrative with attention can scarcely, I think, conclude otherwise, than that he is here speaking of the same persons—the same one hundred and twenty: but if he is, their country is at once determined. When they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak in divers tongues, the multitude which came together to listen said one to another, “Are not *all* these which speak *Galilæans*?” It

is unnecessary, however, to prosecute this inquiry any further. It is certain that the one hundred and twenty were only a *part* of the church; and it is next to certain that they were not those of the disciples of Christ who were inhabitants of Jerusalem; but that they were a company of persons from Galilee—our Lord's own country, who were then in Jerusalem. If, then, the argument is correct, that the government of the church is vested in the church itself, that is, in the *whole* church, then it follows, that the first act of church-government, as it has been called, was an act of glaring injustice,—a small *part* of the church having invaded the rights of the whole; and if it was the case that the one hundred and twenty were Christian Ministers, why, then their conduct appears, on the principle assumed, more extravagant still. We must look on them as a cabal of servants usurping the rights of those whose servants they were. But to conclude—This was altogether so extraordinary a transaction, that nothing can be determined by it on the question of church-government in general. If the one hundred and twenty had been the whole of the church of Christ at that period, still the appointment of the Apostle was not made by the church, nor even by the eleven, but by lot, after special prayer to the Lord to order it so that the man of His own choice might be selected.

The appointment of the seven Deacons (Acts vi. 1—6) is adduced with the same view as the transaction to which we have just adverted. The first thing to be noticed respecting it is, that the business which was transferred to the Deacons was business that had been transacted by the Apostles from the beginning. During our Lord's public ministry He and His disciples had a common fund for the supply of their own wants, and to distribute to the necessities of the poor: but did the Saviour appoint a temporal officer for this department? No; an Apostle was the treasurer or steward. Judas carried "the bag," out of which their own wants were provided for, and the poor relieved; and, after our Lord's death, the Apostles continued to transact this business up to the period when Deacons were chosen. The management of the funds of the church was not, then, a business which had *casually* fallen on them, as some make Peter say; it had been such business as they had never been without; and those who speak of the transaction of the temporal matters of the church as a work so foreign to the office of Christian Ministers, as to be wholly inconsistent with it, would do well to consider, if they are not implying a severe reflection on our Lord Himself, who imposed, from the very beginning, this work on the Apostles. In the next place, the Apostles had not this business taken from them by the church: they voluntarily resigned it,—that is, so far as they did resign it. The language of the narrative is decisive on this point. It shows, beyond all contradiction, that the measure originated with the Apostles themselves. Then, again, although the church, by the direction of the Apostles, nominated the candidates, yet the nomination was confirmed, and the persons were

installed in their office, by the Apostles themselves. The Apostles did thus, in relinquishing that temporal business which was committed to the Deacons, take care that it was intrusted to suitable persons.

But did the Apostles from that time entirely withdraw their attention from the temporal matters of the church, and leave them to the church and to the Deacons? By no means. It was not left to the church to fill the office of Deacon with such persons as it might judge to be suitable. The Apostle tells Timothy what qualifications Deacons must possess; and that candidates must undergo a sufficient trial before he set them apart to the office. (1 Tim. iii. 8—13.) Thus, although the nomination might remain with the church, yet the Apostles, we see, provided that no persons should enter that office but those who were approved of and introduced by themselves and their colleagues. Nor was this all. The Apostles stimulated the churches to liberality. Considerable portions of the Epistles of Paul are occupied with exhortations and discourses on this subject.* And the Apostle and his colleagues in the ministry did not confine themselves to talking and writing upon the subject: they took an active part in raising the necessary funds for the church. The Apostle sent Titus along with others to the Corinthians, (2 Cor. viii. 6,) that their contributions might be all in readiness by the time when he himself should visit them, accompanied by the brethren from Macedonia. (Chap. ix. 4.) He himself had stopped behind, evidently to accelerate and complete the contributions in that country. Then he himself undertook, as he tells the Romans, a journey to Jerusalem, to carry the sums thus raised from Achaia and Macedonia to the saints of that church. (Rom. xv. 25, 26.) On another occasion he and Barnabas are spoken of, in the Acts of the Apostles, as being the bearers of contributions from the church in Antioch to the poorer saints of Judea. (Acts xi. 30.) It is, moreover, expressly said, that this money was sent, not to the Deacons, but to the Presbyters or “Elders,”—the ordinary Pastors of these churches. (Acts xi. 30.) And the distribution of the public funds was under the control of the Apostles and their associates in the ministry. The Apostle is found giving authoritative directions to Timothy as to the manner in which the funds of the church should be appropriated. (1 Tim. v. 16.) We may then safely come to this three-fold conclusion:—1. That the institution of the office of Deacon originated with the Apostles, not with the church. 2. That none filled this office but those who were approved of, and set apart to it, by the Apostles and their colleagues. And, 3. That this office was not designed to withdraw from the cognisance of the Apostles the temporal matters of the church; but that it still remained the proper business of the Christian Minister to excite his flock to liberality,—to take an active part in raising all needful funds for the church,—and to insure their proper distribution. This transaction, the institution of Deacons, thus turns

* See the Epistles generally.

out to be no more helpful to the cause in behalf of which it is adduced than does the other—the appointment of an Apostle.

Another instance from the practice of the primitive Christian church, adduced to show that the government of the church is vested in itself, is the determination of the question concerning circumcision. (Acts xv.) Disputes respecting the rites and ceremonies of the law produced great uneasiness during the first age of Christianity. It was long before the Apostles themselves were entirely divested of their Jewish prejudices. Several years passed away before the Gentiles, as such, had the Gospel fully offered to them; and when God designed to make Cornelius a participant in its blessings, He employed supernatural means to remove the scruples of Peter. By a vision, He showed him that he might go “in to men uncircumcised.” Paul tells us, that on one occasion he “withstood Peter to the face,” on account of his yielding to the prejudices of those who still attached a certain importance to circumcision. When it is considered how great was the reverence with which this distinguishing badge of Judaism was regarded by many, it does not excite surprise that when some, who had come from Judea, taught at Antioch that without circumcision there could be no salvation, a strong sensation was produced, and that disputes on the subject arose. As this was not the case at Antioch only, but in other places the same question was frequently producing similar agitations, it became extremely desirable that some formal, authoritative decision should be had which would be generally respected. To obtain this was the object for which Paul and Barnabas, accompanied by others, went up to Jerusalem. But it is said that the church at Antioch *sent* them; and this circumstance is dwelt on as though it were demonstrative evidence that the government of the church is vested in the church itself; and that the Pastor must submit to its decisions, and obey its commands. Supposing, however, that the whole church is intended when it is said, “they determined” that the Apostle, with his companions, should go, must it necessarily be understood, by the expression, that the church sent the Apostle as a master authoritatively sends his servant? Is anything more intended, than that the Apostle undertook his journey with the hearty concurrence or by desire of the church? Such an interpretation of the language of the narrative appears easy and natural. But are we to adopt it? In the commencement of the second chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians, the Apostle makes mention of his going up to Jerusalem in company with Barnabas; and commentators, whether Calvinist or Arminian, as to doctrine,—or Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Independent, or Methodist, in regard to their views of church-government,—generally agree that he there speaks of the very journey in question—the journey which he undertook on the question of the circumcision.* What then does

* See Hammond, Whitby, Scott, Henry, Doddridge, Macknight, Wesley, and Benson on the passage.

he say about the authority which determined his going to Jerusalem? He tells us, that he “went up by *revelation*.” And so it turns out, after all, that it was the *Lord* who sent the Apostle. The expression respecting his being sent by the church, must therefore be understood in the sense of its *concurring* with the *authoritative* command of the Lord.

But the *whole* church at Jerusalem decided the question.—Nothing of the kind. It was not calculated upon at Antioch that this was to be the case. Why could not the *church* at Antioch settle the question as well as the *church* at Jerusalem? It is expressly said, that it was determined that the Apostle, with his companions, should go up, not to the *church* at Jerusalem, but to “the *Apostles* and *Elders*.” In accordance with this, it is said again, not that the *church*, but that “the *Apostles* and *Elders*” assembled “to *consider* the matter:” and although “the multitude,” that is, the church in general, are afterwards mentioned as being present, yet they are not spoken of as having met “to *consider*” the subject; “the *Apostles* and *Elders*” only are said to have met for that purpose. Nor is the “multitude” represented as taking any part in the conversation. The speaking was confined, as it was most fitting it should be, to those who had met “to *consider* the matter”—to those who had to *deliberate* thereon. But, after all, the question was not decided by the *votes* of “the *Apostles* and *Elders*,” any more than by the *votes* of the whole church,—it was determined by *revelation*. The language in which the decision is expressed cannot be misunderstood:—“It seemed good to the *Holy Ghost*.” The Holy Ghost, then, speaking by the Apostles, authoritatively decided the question; and although it is added “and to *us*,” none will presumptuously suppose that the association of the names of even the Apostles added any *authority* to the decision. The whole business was evidently transacted under special divine direction. The Head of the church, when He sent Paul by revelation up to Jerusalem, could as easily have revealed His will, on the subject in question, to Paul himself; but Infinite Wisdom saw it fitting, in an affair of such moment, that the revelation respecting it should be impressed with such a character of formality, solemnity, and importance, as would secure for it more general respect than a private communication, in an age of revelation, could possibly command. The Apostle was therefore sent to Jerusalem, that the decree might go forth to the church, not on the authority of *one* Apostle only, but as the voice of God speaking by all the Apostles, in solemn assembly, with many other Ministers—men of wisdom, experience, and repute. That the decision was intended, not for the church at Antioch only, is evident from the following history. When the Apostle with his colleagues left Antioch, to visit “every city” where they had preached the Gospel, it is said, that, as they went along, “they delivered them the *decrees* for to keep that were ordained of the *Apostles* and *Elders* which were at Jerusalem.” (Acts xvi. 4.) And here, we may observe in passing, is further evidence

that it was not the *whole* church by which God spake, but by “the *Apostles and Elders.*”

If, then, this passage is brought forward to show that the church ought to *rule* its Pastors, it does not answer the purpose for which it is quoted. It was the *Lord* who *authoritatively* sent Paul, not the *church*. If it is adduced to prove that the church ought to be the judge of doctrine, it serves as little, in this respect, the cause it is designed to support. The point in dispute was settled neither by the *church*, nor by its *Pastors*, but by *immediate revelation*. And if we ask, By *whom* did God communicate his will? the answer is, By the legitimate *Pastors* of the church; not by the *church* itself. And now that the volume of inspiration is complete, and no new revelation is to be expected, it remains, as the business of the Pastor, to take care, while he feeds his flock with wholesome doctrine, that all who assist him in any way also impart the pure word of God. How could the Pastor of the church of Thyatira be blamed by Christ for not silencing false teachers, if he were not the judge of doctrine, as to whether it be true or false?

The case of St. Paul's directing the Corinthians* to deliver the incestuous individual to Satan, may be dispatched in a few words. Those who adduce it to show that the power of inflicting discipline is in the church, lose sight entirely of an important consideration. The first point to be settled is, whether this punishment could be inflicted without an Apostle, or his express authority: for if it were the case that none but an Apostle, or persons acting by the express direction of an Apostle, could perform this highest act of church discipline, the question is settled at once; and this transaction at Corinth, like the others which we have examined, injures the cause it is intended to serve. The language of the Apostle tends to sanction the opinion, that this act was peculiarly apostolical,—that it could not be performed but by an Apostle, or by his express authority. The Apostle represents it to be necessary, that his own spirit should be present, and the power of the Lord Jesus. Whitby, in commenting on the passage, says, “The Apostle speaks not of this as of a *common act* of discipline, which every *Presbyter* might exercise; but as of that which required *his extraordinary* presence in the spirit, and the power of Christ assisting them.” The opinion is, moreover, favoured by the consideration, that in the other instance made mention of in the New Testament, of persons being “delivered to Satan,” the punishment was inflicted by the same Apostle. (1 Tim. i. 20.) Now, before any person concludes that this affair at Corinth is conclusive evidence that the government

* “For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” (1 Cor. v. 3—5.)

of the church is in the church itself, he ought to settle the previous question, and make it apparent that this was an act which could be performed without an Apostle. But when he has accomplished this task, he will find his labour has been in vain. When he has proved that this was only a common act of discipline, which could be performed in the ordinary way, then the question will occur, By whose *authority* did the Corinthians act? And the answer to this question settles the business. The Corinthians acted in this matter, not on their *own* authority, but by the direction and command of the *Apostle*. The church had not tried the offender, and pronounced the sentence; the Apostle had adjudged him; and the church was only the executioner, acting according to the Apostle's warrant. This instance, also, of the manner in which the primitive church was managed, does thus, as far as its evidence extends, contradict the theory which it is adduced to support.

Vain do the attempts to set the practice of the Apostles against the general tenor of the preceptive part of the New Testament thus appear. The inspired volume shows, in language too express for criticism ever to explain away, that the government of the church is vested in its Pastors. One great mistake of those who reject this principle is,—they conclude that, because the Apostles and their colleagues in the ministry governed in the spirit and manner in which they were required to exercise their authority, they did not therefore govern at all. The Ministers of the primitive church remembered that they were not to lord it imperiously over the church,—not to reign in an arbitrary, despotic manner, as though the end for which authority had been given to them was, that they might make it subservient to their own ease and gratification. They lived under the impression that their pastoral power had been imparted for the good of the church; and they therefore endeavoured so to exercise their authority as to convince their flock, that they were affectionately solicitous to promote its welfare. They consulted the wiser and more experienced part of their charge, who assisted them, in various ways, in the important work; and they transacted some church-matters in the face of the church, whose presence was thus a check on them against any temptation to abuse their authority and act improperly. They thus carried the church along with them, and managed it with its own concurrence. On this principle, the New Testament is seen at one with itself; and every passage relating to the practice of the primitive church, which *seems* to militate in any respect against the power of the Pastor, is reconciled with the preceptive part of the Scriptures, which puts the power to rule into his hands. In support of this harmonizing principle of interpretation, I may adduce a passage which we have already examined. In that passage, one of the strongest expressions which can be advanced, in support of the opinion that the power to rule is in the church itself,—is intended, as we have proved, to convey no other idea than that the church acquiesced in the measure

which was adopted. The *church* did not *authoritatively* send the Apostle to Jerusalem: *its sending* him was only *its approving* of the journey,—*its concurrence* in the necessary arrangements.

There is something repugnant in the notion, that the church is intrusted with the government of itself; and that its Pastors are merely its organs, through which it gives expression to its own views. We may suppose a case in primitive times. A faithful Minister of the Gospel proceeded into a heathen country, and was instrumental in raising a church. He was really of some importance so long as his converts were full of penitential sorrow and alarm on account of their state, and were looking up to him, as their best earthly friend, for guidance and direction; but the instant this was over, and he had formed them into a church, his authority was at an end. They were then his masters, and he had to submit to them in the regulation of church-affairs. And the case of the Minister in the present day would, on this principle, be very much the same in regard to all new converts. He would see his spiritual children raised above him the instant they entered his church; and from that period it would be their decision, in part, on the management of church-affairs, which he, as its organ, would have to carry into effect. Such a scheme of church-government does not appear to be easily reconcilable with reason and the fitness of things, or the leading principles of the word of God. Under God, the church owes its origin to its Pastors. It has been called into existence, and is chiefly perpetuated, by the ministry of the Gospel. If the world is to be evangelized, and every human being is to be brought within the pale of the church, the Gospel commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," indicates the primary means by which this great end is to be effected. Whatever subordinate agencies may be employed, the ministry of the Gospel is the leading and principal instrumentality for originating, training, conserving, and extending the church of Christ on earth. It appears, then, to be as reasonable, as I deem it to be scriptural, that the Ministers of the Gospel—the Pastors of the church—should have a pre-eminence and an authority in the direction of its affairs, agreeable to the peculiar relation which subsists between them. Is the order of things to be inverted? and in the spiritual house of the church are the children to deliberate and decide upon the management of its affairs, and the parent to act merely as the chairman of the family-council, and carry into effect its arrangements and conclusions? These remarks are made with all due respect for my fellow-Christians to whose views Independency or Congregationalism is most consonant. Methodism is formed on a different principle: that principle I conscientiously regard as the more scriptural; and, writing for Wesleyans, as I feel strongly, I express my convictions with earnestness in vindication of that system which has been handed down to us from our fathers, and to the maintenance of which we stand solemnly pledged.

Having thus shown that Jesus Christ has committed the ministration of the word and sacraments, and the exercise of discipline, to the Pastors of the church, we may now more particularly inquire, What is necessary to constitute a Pastor? Who are the persons invested with the pastoral office and authority? Four things appear to be requisite for the office: 1. Qualification,—consisting in personal religion, and competent abilities, natural and acquired. 2. A Divine call. It is the prerogative of the great Head of the church, to select whom He chooses for the highly-responsible work of the Christian Pastor, and impress upon their hearts a sense of obligation to undertake that work: the legitimate Christian Pastor is “inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost” to undertake the task of winning souls for Christ, and is thereby made to partake, in some measure, of the feeling of the Apostle, when he said, “Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.” (1 Cor. ix. 16.) 3. A recognition of that call, and a formal committal to him of the sacred trust by those who are possessed of authority in the church to make it. “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also,”—was the injunction of the Apostle to Timothy. And, 4. An actual separation from secular business, and entire dedication to the sacred calling. To dwell, for a time, upon the latter point, I may remark, that God has ever required of those whom he has placed over his church an *entire* dedication of themselves to their sacred employment. In the Jewish church, the Priests filled the pastoral office; they constituted one class of its Pastors, and are frequently spoken of as such in the Old Testament. Now these were wholly consecrated to the duties of their high office. In the division of lands among the tribes, there was no allotment made for them; and for the reason, that they were not to follow the ordinary occupations of life. In lieu of this, tithes were appointed for their support,—that, having their sustenance provided for them without care or effort on their part, they might be left fully at liberty to attend to their holy calling. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, (chap. ix. 13, 14,) the Apostle institutes a comparison between these Pastors of the Jewish church, and their successors in the Christian church: “Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.” The Gospel-law to which the Apostle here refers was laid down by our Lord, when he sent forth his disciples to preach in the towns and villages of Judea. (Matt. x. 9, 10; Luke x. 7.) There is frequent reference made to this law by the inspired writers of the New Testament. The Apostle, addressing the Galatians, says, “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.” Here is the same duty clearly marked out: the Pastor is to be provided with temporal things by those for whose spiritual good he is labouring. The

“double honour” which the Apostle, in a passage already examined, (1 Tim. v. 17, 18,) requires for the laborious Pastor is, as good commentators agree, a more abundant provision for his support; for he enforces the duty which he enjoins by the consideration, that “the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn: and, The labourer is worthy of his reward.” As the ox is to be fed by his master in return for his work,—as the labourer is to have his wages for his labour,—so is the faithful and devoted Pastor to be supported by his people. “The Lord hath thus ordained,” as the Apostle says, “that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel;” and the conclusion to which the Apostle leads us, by his comparison between the Jewish Priests and the Pastors of the Christian church, is irresistible. Why has God made provision for the latter, as well as He did for the former? Because He requires *them* also to be *wholly* given up to the arduous work of their high and holy office. The Christian Pastor’s having to renounce all secular business, by which he might provide for the support of himself and his family, that he may, with an undivided and unembarrassed mind, give up himself without reserve to the sacred employment to which he is called,—is the reason why the Head of the church has made it obligatory upon the church, to provide its Pastors with the temporal things which are necessary for the support of themselves and their families. In accordance with the spirit and design of this law, Christ, when He called His Apostles, required them to *leave all* and follow Him; and so likewise the Apostle, while instructing Timothy how to behave himself as a Minister of Christ, having specified several studies and duties, exhorts him to give himself *wholly* to them. The very terms of the original Gospel commission convey the idea of this entire devotedness on the part of the Minister; and, in fact, indirectly enjoin it: “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations;” “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Here is a work marked out, the most gigantic in which a human being can possibly engage; a work which demands the concentration, and constant and vigorous application, of all the powers of those to whom it is committed. And this “going into all the world,” too, may be well considered as but another mode of imposing on the Minister of Christ, the obligation of renouncing, of leaving all things else behind, for this all-engrossing, all-important task.

Upon this subject Mr. Wesley entertained very decided views. So early as the year 1768 it was brought before the Conference, and received the most serious consideration. The Resolution adopted on the occasion explicitly recognises and maintains the principle, that those who are called to the ministry of the Gospel, ought to withdraw from all secular business, and devote themselves to the duties of their high office. An extract from this Resolution must suffice. The inquiry was, “Should Itinerant Preachers follow trades?” To which it was answered:—

This is an important question. And as it is the first time it has come before us, it will be proper to consider it thoroughly. The question is not, whether they may occasionally work with their hands, as St. Paul did; but whether it be proper for them to keep shop, and follow merchandise.....First, Is it not, with regard to Travelling Preachers, evil *in itself*? Is it well consistent with that scripture, 2 Tim. ii. 4, "No man that warreth," (takes on him the profession of a soldier, as we eminently do,) "entangleth himself with the affairs of this life?" plainly referring to the Roman law, which absolutely forbade any soldier to follow any other profession. Is it well consistent with that word, "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to teaching: meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them?" (1 Tim. iv. 13, 15.) Can we be said to give ourselves to these things, if we follow another profession? Does not our Church, in her Office of Ordination, require every Minister to do this? If they do not, the more shame for them. But this plainly shows, what both they and we ought to do. *We*, indeed, more particularly; because God has called *us* to "provoke them to jealousy," to supply their lack of service to the sheep that are as without shepherds, and to spend and be spent therein. We above all; because every Travelling Preacher solemnly professes to have nothing else to do; and receives his little allowance for this very end, that he may not need to do anything else, that he may not be entangled in the things of this life, but may give himself wholly to these things.

This passage is very important, because it shows, most clearly, in what light Mr. Wesley regarded the Preachers; at the same time that it makes us acquainted with his views, on the subject of Ministers being *wholly* given up to the work.

But did not the Apostle Paul sometimes engage in manual labour for his support? He did occasionally; but under such circumstances that no argument can be derived from the fact, which will militate against the general principle, that the Gospel Minister—the Christian Pastor—is to be entirely devoted to the work of his holy office. When the Apostle laboured for his support, it was on his introducing the Gospel into a new place; as, for instance, into Corinth. On engaging in this work, what was he to do? The church in Corinth could not support the Apostle, when as yet it had no existence. He worked with his own hands, therefore, as a matter of necessity in the first instance; and, afterwards, owing to existing circumstances, he declined to receive support from the Corinthians, that he might not "hinder the Gospel of Christ." (1 Cor. ix. 12.) But neither did he then entirely depend upon his own industry. Referring to this period, in his second Epistle, he says, "I have preached to you the Gospel of God freely;" but he adds, "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me, the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion." (2 Cor. xi. 7—12.) After a church had been founded at Corinth, it thus appears, that, in order to avoid giving any advantage to those "false teachers" who professed great disinterestedness, and wished to have it

understood that they took nothing for their preaching,* the Apostle declined to receive his support from the Corinthians ; but it is further apparent, that he did not then derive his entire maintenance from manual labour. He obtained from the churches of Macedonia that which supplied his temporal wants, while he continued to exercise his ministry at Corinth. Again, when the Apostle was with the Thessalonians, he deemed it necessary to correct a prevalent practical error, and set an example of industry by labouring with his own hands. (2 Thess. iii. 6—12.) But he did not adopt this course because he deemed it wrong in principle to look to the church for a maintenance. At that time, also, while resorting to manual labour to correct, by his example, a prevalent evil among the Thessalonians, he was receiving assistance from other churches. Writing to the Philippians, he says, "For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity." (Phil. iv. 16.) It is thus evident, that in those very places where the Apostle was induced, by the reasons which he mentions, to work with his own hands, rather than derive his support from the churches in which he was then exercising his ministry, he was nevertheless not entirely dependent upon his own industry ; but he obtained his maintenance, in part, from other churches, which were ever ready to minister to his wants. How thankfully the Apostle accepted the contributions sent by other churches, when he was prevented by existing circumstances from receiving his support from the church in whose service he was at the time employed, sufficiently appears from the touching language in which he acknowledged the frequent assistance he obtained from the Philippians, and referred to the great exigencies to which he was sometimes reduced. In the conclusion of his Epistle, he says, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again, wherein ye were also careful ; but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want : for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound : everywhere and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Notwithstanding, ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift : but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound : I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 10—19.)

* See Benson's Commentary, 2 Cor. xi. 10—15.

A careful examination of the whole case sufficiently shows, that the scriptural principle—which requires that the Christian Minister shall be entirely devoted to the duties of his sacred office—is not at all affected by the fact, that the Apostle Paul occasionally resorted to manual labour. The conduct of the Apostle in that respect only furnishes an exception to the rule. He laboured sometimes at his former trade ; but it was only when the force of circumstances prevented him from receiving his support from the church in which he was then exercising his ministry, and because the supplies which he received from other churches were not so regular and abundant as to meet all his wants. The fact, that the Apostle occasionally engaged in manual labour, indeed, affords support to the scriptural principle, instead of weakening its authority. That Ministers should have a competent support provided for them, because their office withdraws them from all mere secular business, was then so distinctly understood, that the conduct of the Apostle gave rise to strong suspicions respecting the legitimacy of his claims to the sacred office which he assumed. In his note upon 1 Cor. ix. 1, Mr. Wesley remarks upon the clause, “‘ Are not ye my work in the Lord ? ’ A full evidence that God hath sent me ? And yet some, it seems, objected to his being an Apostle, because he had not asserted his privilege in demanding and receiving such maintenance from the churches as was due to that office.” It was viewed by them as a suspicious circumstance, that he should not put in his claim for his support ; and so strong was the impression which had been made upon the minds of the Corinthians, who had been converted to the faith by his ministry, and for whose sake he had engaged in manual labour, that he deemed it necessary to write the greater part of a chapter in vindication of himself and Barnabas, against those who called in question the legitimacy of their sacred character, because they sometimes worked for their support. The exception to the scriptural rule, arising out of the Apostle’s occasionally engaging in manual labour, it thus appears, only serves to strengthen the scriptural rule from which it was a departure ; but had it not had this confirmatory effect, it would not have weakened that rule any more than the Apostle’s abstinence from marriage, and his recommendation to others to follow his example, militated against the divine institution of marriage. It might be proper for himself and other Christians, in the circumstances of persecution and peril to which they were then exposed, practically to disregard that institution ; but the institution of marriage itself remained in all its original force, notwithstanding the abstinence which was recommended to the primitive Christians by his advice and example. No exception which circumstances may occasionally render necessary can possibly invalidate a great scriptural principle, or render nugatory a plain and explicit scriptural rule of action. However any of the Apostles and other Christian Ministers, in the peculiarly trying circumstances of the primitive church, might occasionally have recourse to manual labour

for their support ; and however, in every age of the church, Ministers of the Gospel may sometimes find it necessary to follow their example ; still the rule remains the same. No exceptions which necessity may compel can weaken its force. Long as the church remains on earth, and the Christian ministry continues to be exercised, this inspired argument will remain the same,—that, as it was divinely appointed that the Jewish Priests should “live of the things of the temple,” because their time was occupied in “ministering about holy things ;” that, as they should “be partakers with the altar,” because to “wait at the altar” was the one work to which they were set apart,—“even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel,” (1 Cor. ix. 13, 14,) for the reason, that he who sustains the office of the Christian ministry is to “give himself *wholly* to” the duties of his sacred office. (1 Tim. iv. 15.)

That the Gospel principle was well understood in the time of the Apostle, we have seen. What were the views of the early Christian church, in general, may be argued from the fact, that in different Councils which were held in the first ages of Christianity, Canons were frequently made in support of this principle ; prohibiting, in the strictest manner, the Pastors of the church from engaging in mere secular business.

Prepared by the views which we have thus derived from the New Testament, of the nature of the pastoral office, and of the description of persons by whom its functions are legitimately performed, we may now turn again to the constitution of Methodism, and mark its accordance with the word of God. Methodism distinctly recognises the pastoral office, and secures its legitimate and scriptural authority. The *regular Preachers* are the Pastors in the *Methodist flock*. Each individual Preacher, having been made partaker of the Gospel-salvation, and having become persuaded that he is called of God to devote himself to the work and office of the ministry, has had the sacred office formally committed to him by the collective Pastorate of the body, and is now engaged in the work of the ministry, and devoted entirely to the service of the church. Whatever attention he may be required to devote to temporal matters, they are only the temporal matters of the church with which he has to do ; he is wholly separated from worldly business,—from all mere secular affairs.

But are not the Local Preachers and the Class-Leaders “Pastors ?” This is the question proposed by those parties whose erroneous views of the constitution of Methodism it has been my principal object to expose. Whatever may be desired by the individual who recently published* his views on church-government, and who maintains that the government of the church is vested in the whole church ; I imagine that the parties to whom, in the course of my argument, I have

* This refers to a pamphlet published at the time when I wrote the first edition of this Essay.

more especially referred, would not be any better pleased with Methodism, were it re-modelled upon that principle, than they appear to be satisfied with its present constitution ; for the Local Preachers and Class-Leaders would then be of no more importance than the regular Preachers, as the whole Society would be reduced to a common level. What they ask for is, in fact, that the Local Preachers and the Class-Leaders shall be recognised as co-Pastors with the regular Ministers. While I answer, in the negative, the question as to whether Local Preachers are not Pastors, I entertain the greatest respect and affection for that estimable and useful body of fellow-labourers ; many of whom are possessed of talents and literary qualifications which would secure for them distinction in any service of the church. I am anxious to avoid every expression which would even seem to imply anything to their disparagement, or afford reason for the suspicion that the regular Preachers are actuated, with regard to them, by an improper jealousy. It is simply a question of principle which claims our consideration,—a question not to be determined by prejudice or feeling, but by an appeal to the word of God. And, by that which I receive as the teaching of the New Testament, I am led to the conclusion that the Local Preachers of our body are not invested by the great Head of the church with the full ministerial office, and are not, in the proper sense of the expression, Pastors of the flock. As a body, we have ever been strict in the maintenance of the principle that, although personal piety and competent ability are indispensably requisite as a preparation for the office of the ministry, a Divine call is necessary to authorize any one to enter upon that office, and exercise its functions. Now that call, which is given by the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the mind and heart, is, in fact, a renewal to the individual, who is the subject of that operation, of the original Gospel commission : “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” (Mark xvi. 15.) The obligation which the Holy Spirit imposes upon any individual to enter upon the work and office of the ministry, is derived from this original commission. The institution of the Christian ministry is traced to this source ; and, from the terms of this Divine warrant, the Christian Minister, in every age, learns the nature and extent of the commission which, as an individual, he has received. From this he ascertains that his one business is the ministry of the Gospel, and that the world is his parish. The commission does not express the precise locality which shall be his sphere of action ; but it imposes upon him the obligation to exercise his ministry in whatever part of the world his providential lot may be cast. The call is one—that call embraces the whole world, and every creature, every human being in the world ; but, in giving effect to that call, as addressed to an individual, the great Head of the church, by His providential arrangements, marks out the place or country where his ministerial functions shall be performed,—the particular part of the wide-extended field which he is to cultivate. If this be a correct view of the subject, then

does it follow that no one can be regarded as sustaining the ministerial character, who has not had this commission conveyed to him by the inward moving of the Holy Ghost. But then the call alone does not constitute a Minister. It must be obeyed. The individual receiving it must, in the spirit of his call, separate himself from worldly pursuits, and actually enter upon the office of the ministry, and devote himself entirely to the service of the church. The first question then is, Have our Local Brethren a Divine call to the work of the Gospel ministry? And should this be answered in the affirmative, then the inquiry follows, Can they be regarded as Ministers so long as they are not actually separated to the work, but remain, as men of business, engaged in secular pursuits? This question must, I conceive, be answered in the negative. Let them act in pursuance of the call, withdraw from worldly business, and devote themselves to the work and office of the ministry: they will thus legitimately assume the ministerial character, because they have actually become Ministers; but then they will no longer be Local Preachers.

But does not occasional preaching constitute our Local Brethren Ministers, and authorize them to administer the Sacraments? Such a claim cannot, as I conscientiously believe, be established by an appeal to the New Testament. In the apostolic age many preached who were not Ministers. It will not be maintained that the Deacons were Ministers. They were a distinct and subordinate order of church-officers. But they preached. And some of them preached with amazing power and success; as did Stephen, who first won the crown of Christian martyrdom. The Deacons performed other spiritual work besides preaching. The commentator Scott, remarking on 1 Tim. iii. 13, says, "The Deacons were principally appointed to dispense the charity of the church, and to manage its temporal concerns; yet they preached occasionally, or taught in private, or were readers in the public assemblies." The first was the work to which they were more especially appointed; and, as Mr. Wesley says, "whatever time they had to spare from this they employed in works of spiritual mercy." As several of the qualifications required in Bishops were also required in candidates for the office of Deacon; (1 Tim. iii. 8—13;) as some of those endowments could hardly be needed to fit him for the mere transaction of the temporal business of the church; and, as the Apostle encourages Deacons to zeal and fidelity by the consideration, that "they that have used the office of Deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus;"—it seems fair to conclude, that the Deacon, besides attending to his primary duties, was also to act as a subordinate Teacher, and that, if he acquitted himself well in this lower department of spiritual labour, he should obtain preferment, and be raised to the office of Minister or Pastor. Thus, in the early ages of Christianity, it was customary, as we are informed, to pray at the ordination of a Deacon, that he, using the office of Deacon unblamably, might "be held worthy

of a higher degree." And we are informed, moreover, that it was usual in the primitive church to select from among the Deacons persons to fill the office of Presbyter or ordinary Pastor.* This proves that the Deacons were partly employed in a subordinate department of teaching. A man might have an excellent talent for transacting the temporal concerns of the church, and have little or no talent for the work of the ministry; and, however faithfully and long he might use his business-talent in the office of Deacon, that exercise of it would not convert it into a preaching talent. It was more especially, then, by teaching that the Deacons became prepared for the higher office of Minister or Pastor. It was by instructing and exhorting the poor, and the sick, and those who were imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel; by reading in the public assemblies, and by occasional preaching; that their ministerial talents would be developed, and they would acquire that "boldness" and readiness of expression which would prepare them for the ministerial office. Now, if occasional preaching constitutes Wesleyan Local Preachers "Pastors," and qualifies them, as such, to administer the Sacraments, why did not occasional preaching, and teaching in private, make the Deacons Pastors, and empower them to perform all other ministerial acts? But they were not Ministers, nor did they administer the Sacraments. Philip, it is true, "who was one of the seven," baptized the Eunuch; but it was not as Philip the *Deacon*, but as "Philip the *Evangelist*." (Acts xxi. 8.) The Evangelist was one of the *extraordinary* officers of the apostolic church, who assisted the Apostles in the performance of the highest ministerial duties; and to this office Philip appears to have been raised after he was driven from Jerusalem by the persecution commencing with the martyrdom of Stephen.

Occasional preaching, then, does not, we are bound to conclude, impart the ministerial character to a secular man,—one engaged in secular, worldly business,—nor qualify him to administer the holy Sacraments. And this is a conclusion which others have adopted as well as ourselves. That eminent Nonconformist, Richard Baxter, took up the subject in his "Christian Ecclesiasticks;" and in answer to the question, as to the lawfulness of a layman's preaching or expounding the Scriptures, he says, "No doubt but there is some preaching or teaching and expounding which a layman may use." He says, moreover, that, "it is not any one method or sermon-fashion which is proper to a Minister, and forbidden to a layman;" and, also, that "it is not the mere publicness of the teaching which must tell us what is unlawful for a layman." Having enlarged on these three points, he then concludes thus: "But for the regulating of laymen's teaching, 1. They must statedly keep in their families, or within their proper bounds. 2. They must not presume to go beyond their abilities, especially in matters dark and difficult. 3. They must not thrust them-

* See Whitby and Dr. Adam Clarke on 1 Tim. iii. 13.

selves without a just call and need into public and numerous meetings, as Teachers, nor do that which savoureth of pride or ostentation, or which tendeth to cherish those vices in others. 4. They must not live, or preach, as from under the government of the church Pastors: but, being members of their flocks, must do all as under their lawful oversight and guidance: Much less must they proudly and schismatically set up themselves against their lawful Pastors, and bring them into contempt to get themselves reputation, and to draw away disciples after them."

I give this quotation for the purpose of showing, that, in the judgment of that eminent man, an individual may exercise his talents in occasional preaching, and may adopt any mode of sermonizing proper to a Minister, and remain, nevertheless, a layman still. And I am not aware that different views upon the subject are entertained by those Dissenting Bodies which may be regarded as the ecclesiastical successors of the Puritans. In a Congregational church occasional preaching does not constitute the individual a Minister. He alone who sustains the character, and performs all the functions of the Christian Minister, is the person who is connected with the church in the relation of Pastor.

If that claim to the ministerial character which is advanced in behalf of Local Preachers cannot be established by an appeal to the New Testament, neither are the claims set up for Class-Leaders sustained by its teaching. Viewed in the light of inspiration, the Class-Leaders do not appear to be co-Pastors with the regular Preachers, authorized as such to share with them in the exercise of discipline. In the New Testament the Minister of the Gospel appears as the only Pastor in the Christian church. He who nurtures the flock by the ministry of the word and the Sacraments, is the individual who is to administer discipline; the person who is made responsible for its faithful exercise to the great Head of the church. But the Class-Leader, as such, is not a public Preacher of the Gospel: it is only private instruction which he communicates, and he makes no profession of a call to the work of the ministry. However valuable, then, his services, however beneficial to the members of his class the religious advices and counsels which they receive from him, it would be a manifest violation of New-Testament order to recognise the Class-Leader as a co-Pastor with the regular Preachers. Were this done, were the principle that *private religious teaching* constitutes those who impart it Pastors, in the proper and scriptural sense of the term, where could we consistently stop? We must then abandon the conclusion which we have already established respecting the Deacons, and, in contradiction to the New Testament, regard them as Pastors. We must make the same admission with respect to the other subordinate teachers of the apostolic age. On the same principle the primitive Deaconesses, too, will undergo a similar transformation. Mr. Wesley, in speaking of Phebe, says, "In the apostolic age, some grave and pious women were

appointed Deaconesses in every church. It was their office, not to teach *publicly*, but to visit the sick, the women in particular, and to minister to them in their temporal and *spiritual* necessities." But if they did not teach *publicly*, they did teach; and therefore, on the principle in question, they were all in the pastoral office. On the same ground, all our *female* Leaders sustain the pastoral character. They fill precisely the same department as their brother-Leaders; and if the teaching of the one sex makes them Pastors, the teaching of the other sex, which is the very same in kind, must have the like effect on them. Admitting this principle, it would be no difficult matter to prove that every Methodist is a Pastor. To instruct and help one another is a great Methodistic principle. Whatever benefit a Methodist may receive from the advice which the Class-Leader gives to him, and the other members of the class in his hearing, is it not true that a great deal of the instruction and benefit he derives from meeting in class is from listening to the experience of his class-mates? And are not the instruction and the encouragement which our weekly band-meetings and our love-feasts afford communicated on the plan of mutual instruction? In these meetings our people mutually teach and edify one another. But if it is true, that to engage in any kind of teaching in the church conveys the pastoral office and authority, then the Methodist flock is nothing else than a flock of Pastors, for all systematically teach one another. Such would be the chaotic confusion introduced into the church were the theory in question admitted. The only sound conclusion to which the New Testament most clearly conducts us is, that, as occasional teaching, whether in public or private, did not invest the Deacons and Deaconesses, or any others who exercised it, in the primitive church with the ministerial character,—so neither are our Local Preachers and Class-Leaders constituted Pastors by that assistance, however valuable, which they render to the regular Preachers, who are the scriptural Pastors of the Methodist flock. I repeat the intimation which I have previously given, that I adopt this conclusion with most sincere affection and esteem for my brethren the Local Preachers and Class-Leaders. I am only solicitous to know the mind of the Spirit upon this important subject. The question is not what we ought to regard as the most desirable arrangement in the church. The Divine Head of that church has adopted the order which He deems best; and our only business is, prayerfully to ascertain what that is, and observe it. He has not, indeed, given us the details of a plan of church-government; but He has laid down certain great principles, which all bodies of Christians are bound by their allegiance to their Divine Lord not only to recognise in all their church-arrangements, but, moreover, to give them such a place in their ecclesiastical system as will allow them to operate with all their scriptural force and divinely-intended efficacy. These great principles have been the subject of my inquiry; and it is to them, and not to details, and matters of lesser moment, that my conclusions relate.

The first reason which I assigned, in the commencement of this division of the Essay, for the inviolable maintenance of the constitution of Methodism, was, the scriptural character which it has ever sustained. That argument in its favour has now been examined,—and, I would persuade myself, successfully maintained. Methodism, we have found, was, in the first instance, based upon the principle, that God has placed the government of the church in the hands of its Pastors; and all the modifications which it has undergone have been made in accordance with this great Scripture-doctrine. We have seen that, in 1795 and 1797, the power of the Pastor was not taken away from him, and given to others, or even shared with them;—that all the privileges then conceded by the Conference were only so many fences and guards thrown around the Pastor, to prevent him from using his power injuriously;—and that, by means of the District-Committee, and right of appeal to the Conference, all cases of difficulty, which cannot be settled in the ordinary way, nevertheless are determined by pastoral authority,—that the final decision of extraordinary questions is not with the people, but rests with the collective pastorate. That theory, however, which some have recommended to the Connexion in lieu of the scriptural and long-tried system which I have endeavoured to sketch, puts the pastoral office, in the first instance, into commission. The pastoral authority is divided between the Superintendent and the Leaders'-Meeting. Every Leader, although *not* a Pastor, has as large a share of the pastoral authority as the Superintendent, who *is* the scriptural Pastor of the flock. According to that scheme, the difference between the Superintendent and the Leaders, individually, is, simply, that he is Chairman of the Meeting. Then again, having thus shared the authority of the Pastor equally between himself and the Leaders, it rejects the extraordinary provision of the District-Committee, and thus leaves the Pastor stripped of his rightful authority, without help, and without redress. So unscriptural a system the wisdom and piety of the Methodist body will, I am persuaded, reject. The Methodists, generally, of the present day, do not desire that their Pastors, who are under obligation to God to perform all the duties of their sacred office, should give up that power by which alone they can execute their functions, and share it with those who, although they are responsible to God for whatever has been committed to their care, are not responsible for the pastoral office,—for with that they have not been invested by the great Head of the church.

2. It is not, however, solely on the ground of its scriptural character, that I defend the constitution of Methodism. My second argument is, that it is likewise deserving of support on account of the guarantee which it gives for the security of our Methodistic rights and privileges. It guarantees to the whole Connexion the continued possession of the important advantages which it now enjoys.

It offers a pledge that *our doctrines shall be preserved in their purity.*

Our people are secured, as far as any human contrivance can secure them, from the danger of being fed with unwholesome teaching. The doctrines which they believe to be according to the truth, and which, under the Divine blessing, have had the most salutary effect upon their hearts and lives, are contained in that exposition of the Scriptures which is given in Mr. Wesley's four volumes of Sermons, and his Notes on the New Testament; and these works are recognised as the doctrinal standard in the Deeds of the chapels. The Conference itself thus has not the power, if one could suppose it should ever have the wish, to change the doctrines of Methodism for those which would poison rather than feed. Nor can the Preachers of the Circuits do this. Were any of them to preach contrary to our standard doctrines, the local officers have the means of redress in their own hands: they have the right secured to them of bringing such Preachers to trial, and procuring their being silenced. Now, before the Methodists renounce their present system, it becomes them seriously to consider, whether that which is recommended in lieu of it offers any such security for the preservation of the doctrines of Methodism in their purity. Should the local meetings attain that independence for which some persons now contend; should it become a settled point, that they could not be interfered with by the District-Committee or the Conference, in the management of Society-affairs; where would be the guarantee for the purity of doctrine? If a Local Preacher should introduce unsound doctrine, and should by his influence secure a majority among the local officers in his favour,—who could silence him, if there could be no foreign interference with the Circuit? There would be no redress or help in such a case. Nor ought I to be regarded as implying an unworthy insinuation against the Local Brethren, in supposing that one of them might introduce immethodistical doctrine. Surely I may conceive of such a thing as within the range of possibility, when the Plan of Pacification and the Chapel-Deeds not only suppose it possible that the regular Preachers may become heterodox, but make provision for meeting such cases. And it certainly will not be considered extravagant in me to calculate, that a Local Preacher so offending might be supported by a majority of his brethren,—the Local Preachers and Leaders,—when the same Plan of Pacification proceeds on the supposition, that if a Travelling Preacher thus departs from the truth, *his* brethren may be biassed in *his* favour; and, accordingly, provision is made that the local officers may all be united with the regular Preachers in investigating his case. But if this new theory should be introduced, and (as the inventors of it seem to anticipate) the chapels should slide away out of the hands of the Conference, what security would the people then possess, that the doctrines which we regard as the doctrines of the Gospel, might not be supplanted by others widely different? It may be answered,—“The piety of the Local Preachers and Leaders.” Very well: but we have the same protection now; and we have the additional security which the

piety of the regular Preachers affords ; who, as Pastors, are especially appointed by God to watch over the purity of Christian doctrine. And we have still more : all our regular Preachers, and all the Trustees and Local Preachers and Leaders, are enabled so to control each other, that if, on the one hand, a Local Brother should introduce false doctrine, the Superintendent can reduce him to silence ; and if, on the other hand, a regular Preacher should do the same, the local officers can procure his ejection from the pulpit. Who, I ask, then, would exchange that ample protection for the purity of our doctrine which the present constitution of Methodism affords, for that one only remaining security which the new theory offers ?

The Methodist body have, under the present system, a guarantee that they shall continue to enjoy *a competent and profitable ministry*. Providing that their doctrines were preserved pure, if they had not a competent ministry, the full and beneficial effect of those doctrines would not be realised. But this important point is secured. In the first instance, a person cannot enter the Wesleyan ministry until trial has been made of him as a Local Preacher. If he proves generally acceptable to the people, and the sanction of the great Head of the church is given in the blessing attending his labours in that capacity, he must then be recommended to the work by the voice of the Circuit, as expressed in its Quarterly-Meeting. Now all this popular trial, and popular recommendation, of the candidate are necessary, before the Conference can appoint him to a Circuit ; and, after he has entered the ranks of the regular Preachers, he still remains so far under popular control, that if he disappoints the expectations which were formed of him,—if his abilities are found unequal to the work,—if he proves unfaithful, becomes immoral, or unsound in doctrine,—the same popular voice which contributed so much to his elevation can exert as great an influence in procuring his removal,—can bring him to his trial, and secure his removal on proof of his unfaithfulness or incompetency for the ministerial work and office. Constituted as Methodism now is, the people have it placed, to a great extent, within their own power to secure, under the continued blessing of Heaven, a competent and profitable ministry ; and the training now afforded to accepted candidates in the Theological Institution, furnishes additional security that none but suitable men will enter the work. But what kind of ministry could they calculate upon for the future, should once the new plan be introduced, and the chapels should begin “to slide away out of the hands of the Conference,” and the appointment of Preachers to occupy the pulpits fall into other hands ?

The present constitution of Methodism promises to perpetuate, to the Connexion at large, the benefits of *itinerancy*. The Methodist body has ever been eminently and strictly *one*. The talents and qualifications of the regular Preachers have always been regarded as the common property, if one may so speak, of the whole Connexion ; and, on the principle of itinerancy, the different Circuits are enabled successively

to enjoy their ministry. Now, under the present system, the perpetuity of itinerancy is most fully secured. The Model Trust-Deed on which our chapels are settled, formed in accordance with the Deed of Declaration, marks out the time when the Preachers are to be removed, and succeeded by others: and the Conference cannot thus set itinerancy aside, if it would. But if Methodism were altered, as some now recommend; if the Circuits had acquired that kind of independence for which some parties contend; if the local meetings were to obtain the management of local matters, without being subject to foreign control;—how long could the itinerancy be preserved? The Methodist body could not long remain *one*, in these altered circumstances. Division must follow; and some of the Circuits or larger Societies would perhaps become separate churches, each having its Pastor, and independent of the rest. Then, as the Methodists value that connexional union which they now enjoy, and that system of itinerancy by means of which the various talents and ministerial qualifications of the Preachers are so employed as to make them the common property of the body,—it becomes their interest to guard and preserve the system under which their union has been maintained, and the benefits of itinerancy so amply secured.

The Methodist Connexion, moreover, has the fullest security for the *able and faithful management of its temporal concerns and public funds*. These matters are not exclusively in the hands of the regular Preachers, nor yet entirely committed to laymen. Both are united in the District-Meetings, and in the several Managing Committees; and this arrangement affords the best guarantee for a wise and upright administration. One class alone might perhaps be suspected by the other; but the union of Ministers and laymen is calculated to inspire mutual confidence. A system which affords, perhaps, the best security which could be devised for the faithful application of the funds, and the judicious management of the temporal affairs of the Connexion, ought not to be hastily and inconsiderately spurned.

While the present system thus secures to the whole body these common benefits, it guarantees to every class of Methodists their peculiar rights and privileges.

In Methodism, as it is now constituted, our *Class-Leaders* enjoy the respect and influence which are their due. It is fitting that so useful a class of persons should have influence in the management of the Society; and they do possess a large share of influence. They form a kind of council to the Superintendent, with whom he converses on the spiritual state of the Society. They are more than this; they can do more than advise. The Superintendent cannot receive a single person into Society, to whom they formally object; nor can an individual be excluded from Society, in the ordinary course of things, without their concurrence: and their concurrence is equally necessary when a Leader is to be removed from office, or a new one appointed. Where, in short, is the medium between the influence which they have, and that

authority which is strictly and properly pastoral? All the influence and authority which persons can have, in matters of discipline, who are not in the pastoral office, our Leaders do enjoy; for, in addition to that which the letter of the law confers, their locality gives them an influence which the regular Preachers cannot command. A Dissenting Minister remains several years, sometimes a great part of his life, with one people; and he therefore acquires a local influence, which enables him to uphold his authority; but Methodist Ministers, from their more frequent removals, cannot obtain much of that kind of support. Local influence throws its weight into the scale of the Leaders, rather than into that of the Preachers. The Leaders do indeed possess great power; and I have the fullest confidence in the great body of our Leaders, that their good sense and deep piety will ever fortify them, under the blessing of God, against any glittering bait which would tempt them to leave the honourable and useful province in which they are rendered so great a blessing, and aspire after an authority which they could not exercise in accordance with the word of God.

Our *Local Preachers* occupy a distinguished situation under the present constitution of Methodism. By means of their exertions, the Gospel is preached more generally in the Circuits than it could be by the regular Preachers only; and they will ever enjoy, as a reward for their labour of love, the esteem of those who benefit by their exertions. But the respect which they thus secure for themselves by their disinterested exertions, is not all the distinction they enjoy. As no person can be taken into the Itinerant work who is not a Local Preacher, the body of Local Preachers has thus the honour of filling up the ministerial ranks. The office of Local Preacher is the last step in the approach to the regular ministry, and a preparation for the office. Now, it ought to be seriously considered by the Local Preachers, whether it is probable that the new scheme, however imposing in appearance, would in the end secure to them such solid distinction as they at present enjoy. Are the Local Preachers sure they would continue to have the honour of furnishing men for the regular ministry? Are they certain their own services would be regarded of as much importance as they are at present? or, indeed, that they would continue to preach at all? I know the system promises all this, and more; but most of us have lived long enough to learn from experience, that many a fair promise miserably disappoints the expectations which it excites. Among what body of Christians are Local Preachers seen enjoying such importance and distinction as among the Methodists? No ecclesiastical arrangement can afford such scope for their energies, or confer upon them such honour, as the Connexional system: but as the new plan is to settle into a kind of Independency,—whatever it may promise, or whatever it may perform for a while, there is good reason to suspect that, in the end, it might have an effect upon the Local Preachers the very reverse of its pro-

mise, and may, in fact, depress them instead of elevating their condition. Let no insidious enemy ever, then, sow the seeds of jealousy in the bosoms of the Local Preachers. The Travelling Preachers regard them with brotherly kindness, remembering that they themselves were trained in their ranks, and can never view with indifference that body, to which alone they have to look for the perpetuity of their own order.

Our present system secures *due respect and influence* for that *portion of the Society* whose superior wisdom, piety, and experience,—whose station in life, and whose liberality to the cause of God, entitle them to *especial* regard. These as *Trustees*, and *Stewards*, and as *Treasurers*, and members of the *Committees* of our various funds and institutions, obtain a very large share in the management of all the financial and temporal affairs of the Connexion. But would this portion of the Society have their privileges secured to them by the contemplated change? If the proposed new system were established, and the Leaders'-Meetings should obtain the uncontrolled government of both the Preachers and the Societies,—could it be expected that this class of persons would continue to enjoy that respect, and retain that weight and influence in the Connexion which they now possess,—that respectful regard which such persons ought ever to enjoy in the religious community to which they belong?

These are questions which deserve the most serious consideration, especially of the *Trustees*. To the Trustees, the Connexion at large is under great obligations. The majority of our Societies are persons in the humbler walks of life; and, however expanded their hearts may be, their circumstances will not allow them either to contribute much towards the erection of chapels, or to become responsible for the debts incurred in their completion. To those persons who have the ability, and who enter into obligations for the requisite sums, our Societies and congregations are greatly indebted, for the numerous and commodious places of worship which are provided for their accommodation. Some persons, it is true, say that the Trustees have sufficient security, and that they cannot sustain loss. This I grant, on the supposition that Methodism is to remain unchanged. I verily believe that, under our present system, with the continuance of the blessing of God, the body of Trustees will sustain no injury: but the question to be considered is, What would their situation be, if the new scheme were to be adopted? Would the Trustees then have that influence in the Society which it is fitting they should possess, considering the responsibility to which they generously subject themselves? Is it probable that the pulpits would continue to be filled with a ministry, that would secure such large congregations as now throng our chapels? Is it likely that the income from the seat-rents would be kept up? Should the income of the chapels fail, and their circumstances become embarrassed, whither would the Trustees go for help? I do not undertake to answer these questions; but they certainly demand the most serious consideration

on the part of the Trustees. If there is a class among our people who ought to regard, with greater suspicion than the rest, any proposals for a change in our system, it is the Trustees. They, in common with the rest, have their spiritual interests at stake; and they have, what the others have not, their temporal interests, too, involved in the question.

The present constitution of Methodism affords to *every member of Society*, however poor and obscure, *security against oppression*.

Our members are fully guarded against arbitrary expulsion by the *Preachers*. No one can be expelled till he has been proved at the Leaders'-Meeting to be guilty of violating the precepts of the Gospel, as recognised by the Rules and Regulations of the body. The Leaders are thus his protection against tyranny on the part of the Preachers.

And our members are also secured, on the other hand, from being oppressed by a *faction* in the *Leaders'-Meeting*. If the majority of a Leaders'-Meeting, from prejudice, or a factious spirit, or through the influence of some powerful individual, should prevail upon the Superintendent to exclude him from the Society, he has his resource: he can call in the District-Committee, and claim the redress of his grievances. But, on the new plan, what security would the people have against unrighteous expulsion? Were the Leaders'-Meeting to become so all-powerful as some say it ought to be, what would then be the resource of our members, should they be driven from the Society by a prejudiced majority? They would learn, when too late, to attach a proper value to the extraordinary provision of the District-Committee:—they would then discover that this provision was as well calculated to defend the people from oppression on the part of the Leaders'-Meeting, as it was to preserve them from the arbitrary proceedings of the regular Preachers.

Such are the securities which the present constitution affords for the preservation of the rights and privileges of every class of persons in the Methodist body. The regular Preachers, as the Pastors of the flock, are intrusted with its management; but they do not rule arbitrarily, and without control. They administer discipline with the concurrence of their charge,—the wiser and more experienced part of the Society being associated with them; aiding and assisting them in the due exercise of their authority, and restraining them from using it amiss. The more carefully the Constitution of Methodism is studied, the more clearly will its excellence be perceived. It will be seen, that no one class among us is so unduly elevated as to depress the others. There is an admirable harmonizing of interests and balancing of power, which affords, under the blessing of God, the surest guarantee for the preservation of all our Methodistic rights and privileges.

The great question, then, is, Are we to sacrifice our present Constitution, and adopt instead of it that which a class of innovators have thought fit to recommend? We have a system which is the special boon of Heaven. Mr. Wesley and his early associates had no concep-

tion, in the first instance, of what their labours would effect. They went forth without any plan, or any other object than to preach the Gospel wherever they might find an opening. They marked, with careful eye, the indications of Providence; and wherever Providence led the way, they followed. As they advanced, first one institution and then another sprung up, out of circumstances, without any previous thought or arrangement on their part; until that system arose which, as to its great and leading principles, we still enjoy. We have a system, the great outlines of which our fathers, heaven-directed and heaven-assisted, filled up with many prayers and tears, and much solicitude lest they should mar those original features which the finger of Providence had so evidently traced. We have a system which has proved fraught with mercy for millions of our kind; and under whose shade we now enjoy the privileges which are dear to us as men and Christians. And for what are we called upon to reject it? What is offered us in exchange? An untried scheme—a mere creature of the imagination! And will a due regard for our own best interests allow us to make the exchange?—Can we do it consistently with a proper regard for our country?—for the world? If we contemplate our country at the present hour, with all the improvements which have been effected in its religious and moral character; we shall be made to feel that still the most vigorous and combined efforts of all that love the name of Jesus are necessary to withstand the common foe. If we look at the wide world, with what a moral desert are we still surrounded; and with what a piteous cry for help from perishing millions are our ears assailed! And is this the time for us, whom God has so signally owned as instruments in that work of mercy, which He has commenced in these latter days,—is this the time to madly speculate, and make the desperate experiment proposed to us by a number of dissatisfied individuals?—Can we do it with a due regard for posterity? We are to remember that we have to decide not only for ourselves, and for the present generation, but for them that shall follow; and if we do the deed, generations to come may have to bewail our folly. Have we no regard for our own offspring? If we take a wrong step, our children will feel its effects when we lie mouldering in our graves; and, when they think of us, will have to drop the tear of bitter regret on our memory. And shall we, then, reckless of consequences, venture on that which, if once done, can never be undone?—Methinks I hear the great body of the Methodists, with one consentaneous voice, respond,—“No! We will preserve the sacred deposit inviolate, as it has descended to us from our fathers; and, as far as in us lies, we will hand it down, with the blessing of Heaven upon it, to our children,—to generations yet unborn.”

APPENDIX.

A.—PAGE 33.

ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT FOR GENERAL PACIFICATION.

I. CONCERNING THE LORD'S SUPPER, BAPTISM, &c.

1. THE Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall not be administered in any chapel, except the majority of the Trustees of that chapel on the one hand, and the majority of the Stewards and Leaders belonging to that chapel (as the best qualified to give the sense of the people) on the other hand, allow of it. Nevertheless, in all cases, the consent of the Conference shall be obtained, before the Lord's Supper be administered.

2. Wherever there is a Society, but no chapel, if the majority of the Stewards and Leaders of that Society testify, that it is the wish of the people that the Lord's Supper should be administered to them, their desire shall be gratified: provided that the consent of the Conference be previously obtained.

3. Provided nevertheless, that in Mount-Pleasant chapel, in Liverpool, and in all other chapels where the Lord's Supper has been already peaceably administered, the administration of it shall be continued in future.

4. The administration of Baptism, the Burial of the Dead, and Service in church-hours, shall be determined according to the Regulations above mentioned.

5. Wherever the Lord's Supper shall be administered according to the before-mentioned Regulations, it shall always be continued, except the Conference order the contrary.

6. The Lord's Supper shall be administered by those *only* who are authorised by the Conference; and at such times, and in such manner *only*, as the Conference shall appoint.

7. The administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, according to the above Regulations, is intended only for the members of our own Society.

8. We agree that the Lord's Supper be administered among us on Sunday evenings only: except where the majority of the Stewards and Leaders desire it in church-hours; or where it has already been administered in those hours. Nevertheless, it shall never be administered on those Sundays on which it is administered in the Parochial Church.

9. The Lord's Supper shall always be administered, in England, according to the form of the Established Church: but the person who administers shall have full liberty to give out hymns, and to use exhortation and extemporary prayer.

10. Wherever Divine Service is performed in England, on the Lord's Day, in church-hours, the officiating Preacher shall read either the Service of the Established Church, our venerable Father's Abridgment, or at least, the Lessons appointed by the Calendar. But we recommend either the full Service or the Abridgment.

II. CONCERNING DISCIPLINE.

1. The appointment of Preachers shall remain solely with the Conference; and no Trustee, or number of Trustees, shall expel or exclude from their chapel or chapels any Preachers so appointed.

2. Nevertheless, if the majority of the Trustees, or the majority of the Stewards and Leaders of any Society, believe that any Preacher appointed for their Circuit, is immoral, erroneous in doctrines, deficient in abilities, or that he has broken any of the Rules above mentioned, they shall have authority to summon the Preachers of the District, and all the Trustees, Stewards, and Leaders of the Circuit, to meet in their chapel on a day and hour appointed (sufficient time being given). The

Chairman of the District shall be President of the assembly : and every Preacher, Trustee, Steward, and Leader shall have a single vote, the Chairman possessing also the casting voice. And if the majority of the Meeting judge, that the accused Preacher is immoral, erroneous in doctrines, deficient in abilities, or has broken any of the Rules above mentioned, he shall be considered as removed from that Circuit : and the District-Committee shall, as soon as possible, appoint another Preacher for that Circuit, instead of the Preacher so removed ; and shall determine among themselves how the removed Preacher shall be disposed of till the Conference, and shall have authority to suspend the said Preacher from all public duties till the Conference, if they judge proper. The District-Committee shall also supply, as well as possible, the place of the removed Preacher, till another Preacher be appointed. And the Preacher thus appointed, and all other Preachers, shall be subject to the above mode of trial. And if the District-Committee do not appoint a Preacher for that Circuit, instead of the removed Preacher, within a month after the aforesaid removal, or do not fill up the place of the removed Preacher, till another Preacher be appointed, the majority of the said Trustees, Stewards, and Leaders, being again regularly summoned, shall appoint a Preacher for the said Circuit, provided he be a member of the Methodist Connexion, till the ensuing Conference.

3. If any Preacher refuse to submit to the above mode of trial, in any of the cases mentioned above, he shall be considered as suspended till the Conference. And if any Trustees expel from any chapel, a Preacher, by their own *separate* authority, the Preachers appointed for that Circuit shall not preach in that chapel till the ensuing Conference, or till a trial take place, according to the mode mentioned above.

4. If any Trustees expel or exclude a Preacher, by their own *separate* authority, from any chapel in any Circuit, the Chairman of the District shall summon the members of the District-Committee, the Trustees of that Circuit who have not offended, and the Stewards and Leaders of the Circuit. And the members of such assembly shall examine into the evidence on both sides ; and if the majority of them determine, that the state of the Society, in which the exclusion took place, requires that a new chapel should be built previous to the meeting of the Conference, every proper step shall be immediately taken for erecting such chapel. And no step shall on any account be taken, to erect a chapel for *such purpose*, before the meeting of the Conference, till such meeting be summoned, and such determination be made.

5. No Preacher shall be suspended or removed from his Circuit by any District-Committee, except he have the privilege of the trial before mentioned.

6. The Hundred Preachers mentioned in the enrolled Deed, and their successors, are the only *legal* persons who constitute the Conference ; and we think the junior brethren have no reason to object to this proposition, as they are regularly elected according to seniority.

7. Inasmuch as, in drawing up the preceding Regulations, we have laboured to restore and preserve the peace and unity of the Society, and, in order thereto, have endeavoured to keep the Preachers out of all disputes on the subjects therein specified,—Be it understood, that any Preacher who shall disturb the peace of the Society, by speaking for or against the introduction of the Lord's Supper in our Societies, or concerning the old or new plan, so called, shall be subject to the trial and penalties before mentioned.

8. And in order that the utmost impartiality may be manifest in these Regulations, for the peace of the whole body, we also resolve, that if any Local Preacher, Trustee, Steward, or Leader, shall disturb the peace of the Society, by speaking for or against the introduction of the Lord's Supper, or concerning the old or new plan, so called, the Superintendent of the Circuit, or the majority of the Trustees, Stewards, and Leaders of the Society so disturbed, shall have authority to summon a Meeting of the Travelling Preachers of the Circuit, and the Trustees, Stewards, and Leaders of that Society. Evidence shall be examined on both sides ; and if the charge be proved, the Superintendent Preacher shall expel from the Society the person so offending. (See Minutes of Conference for the year 1795, vol. i., p. 322.)

B.—PAGES 40, 42, 43, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 53.

TO THE METHODIST SOCIETIES.

DEAR BRETHREN,

Leeds, August 7th, 1797.

WE think it our duty to inform you, by the earliest opportunity, of the measures we have taken, in order to satisfy those of our brethren who have been made more or less uneasy by sundry publications circulated through the Societies; and we trust that, on a serious consideration of the Regulations we have agreed to at this Conference, you will see that the sacrifices in respect to authority, which we have made on the part of the whole body of Travelling Preachers, evidence our willingness to meet our brethren in everything which is consistent with the existence of the Methodist discipline, and our readiness to be their servants for Jesus's sake.

I. In respect to finances, or money-matters:

1. We have determined to publish annually a very minute account of the disbursement, or application, of the Yearly Collection; and,

2. A full account of the affairs of Kingswood School.

3. That all bills for the support of Travelling Preachers and their families, in respect to deficiencies, house-rent, fire, candles, sickness, travelling expenses, and all other matters of a temporal kind for their support, for which the Circuits cannot provide, shall first meet with the approbation of the Quarterly-Meeting, and be signed by the general Steward of the Circuit, before they can be brought to the District-Committee.

II. In respect to all other temporal matters:

1. It has been determined, that no Circuits shall be divided till such division has been approved of by their respective Quarterly-Meetings, and signed by the general Stewards.

2. That no other temporal matter shall be transacted by the District-Committees, till the approbation of the respective Quarterly-Meetings be first given, signed by the Circuit-Stewards.

III. In respect to the receiving and excluding private members of the Society:

1. The Leaders'-Meeting shall have a right to declare any person on trial improper to be received into the Society; and, after such declaration, the Superintendent shall not admit such person into the Society.

2. No person shall be expelled from the Society for immorality, till such immorality be proved at a Leaders'-Meeting.

IV. In respect to the appointment and removal of Leaders, Stewards, and Local Preachers, and concerning Meetings:

1. No person shall be appointed a Leader or Steward, or be removed from his office, but in conjunction with the Leaders'-Meeting: the nomination to be in the Superintendent, and the approbation or disapprobation to be in the Leaders'-Meeting.

2. The former Rule concerning Local Preachers is confirmed; namely, That no person shall receive a Plan as a Local Preacher, without the approbation of a Local-Preachers' Meeting.

3. In compliance with a request made by the Committee of persons from various parts, namely, "That the Conference be requested to re-consider and revise those Rules which relate to the calling of Meetings, and appointing Local Preachers, made last year," we say, "No Local Preacher shall be permitted to preach in any other Circuit than his own, without producing a recommendation from the Superintendent of the Circuit in which he lives; nor suffer any invitation to be admitted as a plea, but from men in office, who act in conjunction with the Superintendent of that Circuit which he visits." The design of this Rule is to prevent any, under the character of Local Preachers, from burdening the people, either by collecting money, or by living upon them; and to prevent improper persons, who bear no part of the expense, from inviting Local Preachers thus to visit them. But it never was intended to reflect the least disrespect on any of our worthy brethren, the Local Preachers, whom, considered as a body, we greatly respect. And it should not be lost sight of, that several of the most respectable Local Preachers in the

kingdom, who were in the Committee which met the Committee of Preachers appointed by the Conference, declared their high approbation of the Rule, and desired that it might be strengthened as much as possible, as none could justly complain of it.

4. As the Committee above mentioned requested also, that the Minutes of the last Conference, concerning the calling of Meetings to consider of the affairs of the Society or Connexion, be explained; and as we are exceedingly desirous of preserving the peace and union of the whole body; we have agreed upon the following explanation: namely,

(1.) As the Leaders'-Meeting is the proper Meeting for the Society, and the Quarterly-Meeting for the Circuit, we think that other formal Meetings, in general, would be contrary to the Methodist economy, and very prejudicial in their consequences: But,

(2.) In order to be as tender as possible, consistently with what we believe to be essential to the welfare of our Societies, we allow that other formal Meetings may be held, if they receive the approbation of the Superintendent and the Leaders' or Quarterly Meeting; provided also, that the Superintendent, if he please, be present at every such Meeting.

V. We have selected all our ancient Rules, which were made before the death of our late venerable Father in the Gospel, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, which are essential Rules, or prudential at this present time; and have solemnly signed them, declaring our approbation of them, and determination to comply with them, one single Preacher excepted,* who, in consequence, withdrew from us.

VI. We have determined, that all the Rules which relate to the Societies, Leaders, Stewards, Local Preachers, Trustees, and Quarterly-Meetings, shall be published with the Rules of the Society, for the benefit and convenience of all the members.

VII. In respect to all new Rules which shall be made by the Conference:

It is determined, that if at any time the Conference see it necessary to make any new Rule for the Societies at large, and such Rule shall be objected to at the first Quarterly-Meeting in any given Circuit; and if the major part of that Meeting, in conjunction with the Preachers, be of opinion that the enforcing of such Rule in that Circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that Circuit; it shall not be enforced, in opposition to the judgment of such Quarterly-Meeting, before the second Conference. But, if the Rule be confirmed by the second Conference, it shall be binding to the whole Connexion. Nevertheless, the Quarterly-Meetings rejecting a new Rule, shall not, by publications, public Meetings, or otherwise, make that Rule a cause of contention; but shall strive, by every means, to preserve the peace of the Connexion.

Thus, brethren, we have given up the greatest part of our executive government into your hands, as represented in your different public Meetings.

1. We have delivered the whole of our Yearly Collection to your management. For we know, by experience, that the bills of the Quarterly-Meetings, if only *mere* justice be done to the Preachers and their families, will amount to much more than the Yearly Collection. The Conference will, in this business, have no authority whatsoever: they will have nothing but the trouble of receiving the money, and paying the bills which shall have been sent to them from the Quarterly-Meetings, and been approved of by the District-Committees. And when the accounts are published by the Conference, every Quarterly-Meeting may compare its own accounts with those of the Conference, and thereby have as complete a check as the nature of things can possibly admit of.

The Conference has reserved to itself the management of its own Book-Concerns. This is most reasonable: as the institution was established for the carrying on of the work of God, under the direction of Mr. Wesley and the Conference; was continued, by the deed or codicil of Mr. Wesley's will, for the use of the Conference; as the whole burden of the management of the business lies upon the Conference, and the servants they employ, and on the Superintendents of Circuits; and also, as it is the only fund which can supply any deficiencies of the Yearly Collection, as

* Before the Conference concluded, two other Preachers withdrew.

the accounts published in our Minutes for several years past clearly evidence, the Yearly Collection having not been nearly sufficient for the wants of the Preachers and families, and for the carrying on of the work of God in general.

2. The whole management of our temporal concerns may now be truly said to be invested in the Quarterly-Meetings, the District-Meetings having nothing left them but a negative.

3. Our Societies have a full check on the Superintendent, by the means of their Leaders'-Meeting, in regard to the introduction of persons into Society; whilst the Superintendent has sufficient scope allowed him for the increase of the Societies, not only according to the common course of things, but at the times of remarkable out-pourings of the Spirit of God.

4. The members of our Societies are delivered from every apprehension of clandestine expulsions; as *that* Superintendent would be bold indeed, who would act with partiality or injustice in the presence of the whole Meeting of Leaders. Such a Superintendent, we trust, we have not among us: and if such there ever should be, we should be ready to do all possible justice to our injured brethren.

5. There is now no Society-officer among us, who can be received without the consent of that meeting to which he particularly belongs, nor can any officer be appointed, except upon the same plan.

6. In order to prevent any degree of precipitation in making new Rules, and to obtain information of the sentiments of our people on every such Rule, we have agreed to the Article mentioned under the seventh head, by which no Regulations will be finally confirmed, till after a year's consideration, and the knowledge of the sentiments of the Connexion at large, through the medium of all their public officers.

In short, brethren, out of our great love for peace and union, and our great desire to satisfy your minds, we have given up to you by far the greatest part of the Superintendent's authority: and, if we consider, that the Quarterly-Meetings are the sources from whence all temporal regulations, during the intervals of the Conference, must now originally spring; and also that the Committee, formed according to the Plan of Pacification, can, in every instance in which the Trustees, Leaders, and Stewards choose to interfere respecting the gifts, doctrines, or moral character of Preachers, supersede, in a great measure, the regular District-Committees; we may, taking all these things into our view, truly say, that such have been the sacrifices we have made, that our District-Committees themselves have hardly any authority remaining, but a bare negative in general, and the appointment of a representative to assist in drawing up the rough draught of the Stations of the Preachers. And besides all this, we have given the Quarterly-Meetings opportunities of considering every new Law, of suspending the execution of it for a year in their respective Circuits, and of sending their sentiments on it to the Conference, before it be finally confirmed.

We have represented these measures which we have taken for your satisfaction, in as concise a manner as we well could, giving you the sense of the whole, not only for brevity's sake, but for expedition, that you may be informed of the general heads of our proceedings as soon as possible. In the *regulations* which *will be published* with the Rules of the Society, as mentioned above, you will have the whole at large. We are your affectionate brethren,

Signed, in behalf and by order of the Conference,

THOMAS COKE, *President.*

SAMUEL BRADBURN, *Secretary.*

SUNDRY MISCELLANEOUS REGULATIONS.

I. WITH RESPECT TO DISTRICTS.

1. IN order to render our Districts more effective, the President of the Conference shall have power, when applied to, to supply a Circuit with Preachers, if any should die or desist from travelling; and to sanction any change of Preachers which it may be necessary to make in the intervals of the Conference. And to assist at any District-Meeting, if applied to for that purpose, by the Chairman of the District, or by a majority of the Superintendents in such District. And he shall have a right, if written to by any who are concerned, to visit any Circuit, and

to inquire into their affairs with respect to Methodism, and, in union with the District-Committee, redress any grievance.

2. The Chairman of each District, in conjunction with his brethren of the Committee, shall be responsible to the Conference for the execution of the Laws, as far as his District is concerned.

3. That no Chairman may have cause to complain of the want of power, in cases which (according to his judgment) cannot be settled in the ordinary District-Meeting, he shall have authority to summon three of the nearest Superintendents, to be incorporated with the District-Committee, who shall have equal authority to vote, and settle everything till the Conference.

4. The Conference recommends it to the Superintendents of the Circuits, to invite, on all important occasions, the Chairman of their respective District to be present at their Quarterly-Meetings.

5. The Chairman of every District shall be chosen by the ballot of the Conference, after the names of all the Preachers in the District have been read to them by the Secretary.

II. AS TO DELEGATES.

The Conference, having maturely considered the subject, are thoroughly persuaded, with many of our Societies, whose letters have been read in full Conference, that they cannot admit any but regular Travelling Preachers into their body, either in the Conference or District-Meetings, and preserve the system of Methodism entire, particularly the Itinerant plan, which they are determined to support. But let it be well observed, that, in explaining their Minutes, it was fully and explicitly understood, that, if there be any accusation against a Preacher, or any difficult affair to settle, not only the Circuit or Town Steward, but any Leader, or even member of the Society, shall be admitted as evidence to the District-Meeting; provided the matter has been first heard at a Quarterly-Meeting.

III. WITH REGARD TO PREACHERS.

1. Before any Superintendent propose a Preacher to the Conference, as proper to be admitted on trial, such Preacher must not only be approved of at the March Quarterly-Meeting, but must have read and signed the General Minutes, as fully approving of them. Nor must any one suppose, or pretend to think, that the conversations which have been on any of these Minutes, were intended so to qualify them, as in the least to affect the spirit and design of them.

2. No Local Preacher shall keep love-feasts without the consent of the Superintendent, nor in any wise interfere with his business. Let every one keep in his own place, and attend to the duties of his own station.

IV. TOUCHING THE BOOK-CONCERNS.

It is agreed,

1. That every Superintendent shall settle his accounts with, and pay the balance to, Mr. Whitfield, at every Conference, for the preceding year.

2. That a Circular Letter shall be drawn up, and sent by Mr. Whitfield to every Superintendent, informing him of the above Resolution.

3. The Article made last year, and published in the Minutes, relative to printing, shall stand in its full force, with this exception: should a manuscript be rejected by the Book-Committee, a Preacher may print it, provided he do not sell it at our chapels, nor advertise it from our pulpits. The design of this Rule is to prevent any Preacher in our Connexion from selling at the doors of our chapels or otherwise, or offering to sell, any books or pamphlets among our people, but those which belong to the Conference, and come from our Book-Room. N.B. If a Preacher be attacked by any of our enemies, and his character misrepresented, his printing a reply in his own defence shall not be deemed a breach of this Rule.

V. CONCERNING THE WEST INDIES.

1. Let a collection be made in the course of this year for the support of the Missionaries, in every congregation where it is practicable.

2. The District-Committees in the month of May are to inquire, whether any

Preacher is willing to go to the West Indies ; and the Chairmen of those Districts, in which any Preacher offers himself, are to inform Dr. Coke of it before the meeting of the Irish Conference.

VI. THE CASE OF BRISTOL.

1. It is the opinion of the Conference, that the Plan of Pacification, in respect to the affair at Bristol, has been broken ; but they are determined this shall not be a precedent, but they will take proper means that the Plan shall be sacredly observed in all its parts in future.

2. The Conference, in union with the Committee of Trustees in Leeds, advise the contending parties in Bristol to settle their differences in the following manner :—

(1.) That our brethren who attend divine service at the Old Room and Guinea-Street chapel, unite with their brethren of the New Chapel, and bring all their subscriptions and collections into one and the same channel with our brethren of the New Chapel, according to the agreement at Manchester, and take seats in, and attend, in general, the services at the New Chapel.

(2.) That our brethren of the New Chapel, if the others comply with the above condition, give up the service in church-hours in that chapel.

VII. PUBLIC COLLECTIONS.

1. The Superintendents in the Bristol District are to make a collection in their respective Circuits, and in the Bradford Circuit, as soon as convenient, towards paying the workmen the money due to them on account of our chapel at Frome.

2. A collection is to be made through Rye, Rochester, and Canterbury Circuits, for the Dover House.

3. A collection is to be made for Axminster through all the Circuits in the Salisbury District.

4. A collection is to be made for Tavistock through all the Circuits in the Plymouth-Dock District.

5. A collection is to be made for Falmouth through the Redruth, Penzance, and St. Austle Circuits.

6. A collection is to be made through the Shrewsbury and Chester Circuits for the chapel at Myrthyr-Tydvill, in the Brecon Circuit. N.B. The Brecon Circuit is to be divided.

7. A collection is to be made for Doncaster through the Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield Circuits.

8. A collection is to be made for Carlisle through the York, Whitby, and Newcastle Circuits.

All the above collections to be made as soon as convenient, that they may not interfere with the stated collections.

Q. When and where shall our next Conference be held ?

A. In Bristol, on the last Monday in July, 1798.

N.B. The Representatives of the Districts, who form the Committee for stationing the Preachers, will meet as usual, on the preceding Wednesday, in the morning, at six o'clock.

Signed, in behalf and by order of the Conference,

THOMAS COKE, *President*,

SAMUEL BRADBURN, *Secretary*.

(See Minutes of Conference for the year 1797, vol. i., p. 374.)

C.—PAGE 65.

Q. XXII. WHAT is the decision of the Conference on the erection of Organs in our chapels ?

A. We think that in some of the larger chapels, where some instrumental music may be deemed expedient in order to guide the congregational singing, Organs may be allowed, by special consent of the Conference ; but every application for such

consent shall be first made at the District-Meeting; and if it obtain their sanction, shall be then referred to a Committee at the Conference, who shall report their opinion as to the propriety of acceding to the request, and also as to the restrictions with which the permission to erect an Organ ought, in that particular case, to be accompanied. (See Minutes of Conference for the year 1820, vol. v., p. 146.)

D.—PAGES 43, 49, 71.

SPECIAL ADDRESS OF THE CONFERENCE OF 1835.

THE following three sections of the Address contain the explanations and modifications referred to in the notes at pages 43, 49, 71, of the preceding Essay.

I. FINANCIAL AFFAIRS.

1. The Conference has long felt it to be both just and expedient, and to themselves (as a body of Christian Ministers) *exceedingly agreeable*, that the active management of the financial affairs of the Connexion, whether local or general, should be undertaken, as far as possible, by Laymen of established character for integrity, Christian principle, and steadfast attachment to the interests of Methodism,—accustomed to the transaction of similar business,—able to command sufficient leisure for such “labours of love” as are needed in this department of the “work of the Lord,”—and willing to consecrate that leisure to the service of our common cause. The Conference heartily concurs in the principle, that those of our Public Funds which are wholly or chiefly supported by the contributions of our people at large, (although these contributions, as it is well known, are principally *obtained* by the public exertions and private applications of the Preachers themselves,) should be expended, under the general direction of the Conference, by *Committees*, composed not of Preachers only, but of *Preachers and Laymen conjointly*. In our *very peculiar* system of Itinerancy, and Connexional Union, the assistance of the Preachers in such Committees will always be found indispensable to the good practical working of the several Funds; because *they* obviously possess a more intimate and personal acquaintance with the circumstances and necessities of our work, in its varied relations and mutual bearings, and in its now widely-extended field of operation, than *local men*, however able and devoted, can possibly acquire. And it would not be equitable or reasonable to demand, that those whose influence and activity are mainly relied upon for *procuring* pecuniary support to our institutions, and whose individual and ministerial character is therefore *pledged to the public* for the right application of the Funds which they are employed to advocate and maintain, should be systematically excluded from the Committees to which those Funds are confided. On the other hand, it is equally just and advantageous that the body of contributors should have, in the respectable Lay-Members united with the Preachers in the Committees, a sufficient *security* for the proper and careful expenditure of the public money. By the plan of Mixed Committees both these objects are accomplished; and all parties, who, either by personal service or pecuniary benevolence, have a share in the work of *contribution*, are enabled to exercise a fair and salutary influence in the subsequent work of *distribution*.

2. These views and principles *are not new* in the Wesleyan-Methodist Connexion. They have been for many years in extensive operation among us. The shameless assertions of some modern adversaries of our body, that our people have little or no share, according to our existing economy, in the management of their financial concerns, and that the Preachers are desirous to have in their own hands either the exclusive control, or the *onerous* and *active* management, of the public funds of the body, is a calumny which the Conference are bold to meet with a positive and justly indignant denial. Most gladly would they be exempted, if a sufficient number of other persons of adequate leisure and influence could be found to undertake the task, from much of that labour, even in *soliciting* pecuniary support for our

work, to which the necessity of the case, and their love for the cause of God, alone induce them now to submit.

It is matter of notoriety, that *all the Local Contributions* of our Societies and friends, constituting by far the largest portion of the whole financial concerns of the Connexion, are now, and have been for a long series of years, regularly paid into the hands of the Society-Stewards and Circuit-Stewards annually appointed for this purpose, and expended by them, or under their entire superintendence and direction, according to our established usages and rules. A report of their management in these matters is constantly made by the Stewards to the Quarterly-Meetings of their respective Circuits.

As to the contributions to those *Public Funds*, by which our various institutions for the general purposes of the Connexion, or for objects of piety and benevolence, are supported, they are, in like manner, *generally* expended under the superintendence of *mixed* Committees, constituted on the principles above stated. Every *security* which can be reasonably desired in a *religious* community like ours is thus afforded, that the moneys liberally contributed shall be honestly expended in effecting the great purposes for which they are solicited and designed. This has long been the established practice with respect to *the Missionary Fund* and *the General Chapel Fund*. Last year the Conference spontaneously applied the same principle to *the School Fund*; and they are now not merely willing, but anxious, that it should be fully extended also to the *only two remaining* Funds, which are at all materially or generally aided by the contributions of our people; namely, *the Contingent Fund*, and *the Preachers' Auxiliary Fund*.

3. With respect to *the Contingent Fund*, which derives its means of usefulness principally from what are termed *the Yearly Collection* in the Classes, and *the July or Home Missionary Collection* in our congregations, and to which the Conference affords considerable aid by a voluntary donation from the profits of our Book-room, —the largest part of its annual income, by much, is employed in supplying the deficiencies of the poorer and smaller Circuits in Great Britain and Ireland, and especially those of new and infant stations, unable, as yet, to meet fully their own local expenses. These, which are called *the Ordinary Deficiencies*, are regularly examined and adjusted, for the current year, at the Financial District-Meetings in September, and the subsequent Annual District-Meetings in May; when *two Circuit-Stewards* from each Circuit in the District are earnestly requested to attend, and have an equal right with the Preachers to speak and vote on every financial question. The whole grant made from the Contingent Fund to that District is divided among the several *claimant Circuits* in their presence, and with their assistance and concurrence. Thus, by far the greatest portion even of *the Contingent Fund* is *already* placed under an efficient control, by means of a *mixed* meeting. It only remains to apply the same principle to the distribution of that part of the same Fund which is expended on what are called *the Extraordinary Deficiencies* of the year; including grants for “Travelling Expenses,” —“Afflictions,” —“Furniture” for Preachers' Houses, —and “Miscellaneous Expenses” of various kinds, especially those connected with the executive department of our general work, as directed by the Conference, and the due administration of our discipline. These “Extraordinaries” have hitherto, for the sake of convenience, been settled at the time of the Annual Conference, in a meeting of the Chairmen of the several Districts. But the Conference now resolves as follows; viz.,—

(1.) That the entire portion of the business of the Contingent Fund, which cannot be finally settled by the Preachers and Stewards in the Local District-Meetings, shall henceforth be confided to a *Mixed* Committee, who shall meet in the week before the annual assembly of the Conference, and be called, “the Committee of the Contingent Fund,” consisting of the President and Secretary of the Conference, and of thirty other members, viz., *fifteen Preachers*, to be annually appointed by the Conference, and *fifteen Laymen*, to be annually chosen from the Districts which are most contiguous to the place where the Conference is to be held, or from which it is likely that Laymen of suitable leisure and information may be induced to attend the ensuing Conference. The appointment of these Lay-Members shall rest *exclusively* with the *Circuit-Stewards* of those Districts which shall be specified in the Minutes of the Conference from year to year, as most conveniently situated for

this purpose; and shall take place at the time of their assembly in the *May* District-Meetings, as soon as they shall have finished the business connected with the *Ordinary* Deficiencies of their respective Districts.

(2.) That *two* Treasurers and two Secretaries of the Contingent Fund shall be annually appointed, who shall be *ex officio* members of the Committee. One of the Treasurers shall in future be a Lay-Member of the Society.

(3.) That the same Committee, or such members of it as can conveniently be present, shall be the *Committee of Distribution*, who shall meet at the close of each Conference, or as soon as the Stations of the Preachers shall have been finally settled, for the purpose of allotting to *each District* its fair and necessary share, according to its means and probable expenditure, of the gross sum which they may deem it proper to devote, out of the estimated income of the ensuing year, to the payment of "Ordinary Deficiencies" in the Circuits. At this final meeting they shall also *complete* the settlement of the "Extraordinaries" for the *past* year, by examining those items of *Miscellaneous Expenditure*, belonging to that department, the exact amount of which could not be ascertained at an earlier period, because they necessarily depend upon various executive arrangements which can be determined only during the course of the proceedings of each successive Conference.

(4.) That to the said Mixed Committee of the Contingent Fund shall likewise be confided, at their meeting in the week before the Conference, the duty of examining and regulating the affairs of the *Children's Fund*; for which purpose the two Treasurers of that Fund, (one of whom shall, as now, be always a lay-member of the Society,) and also its Secretary, when he can conveniently attend the Conference, shall be *ex officio* members of the Committee of the Contingent Fund.

(5.) That the Chairman and the Financial Secretary of each District shall be desired to attend the meetings of the Committee of the Contingent Fund, during the time at which the applications from that District shall be under consideration, in order to state in person the cases which they have to recommend, as agreed upon at their respective District-Meetings in May, and to make the Committee fully acquainted with the circumstances of every claimant Circuit or individual.

4. In reference to the *Preachers' Auxiliary Fund*, the Conference resolves as follows; viz.,—

(1.) That the Annual Distribution of the sums contributed by our friends to this Fund shall in future be intrusted to a Committee, consisting of the President and Secretary of the Conference, with *eleven Preachers*, and *eleven Laymen*, to be appointed from year to year by the Conference: such distribution being conducted according to the general plans and regulations hitherto adopted, and on the principles of a becoming tenderness and respectful feeling towards the Aged Preachers, or Widows or Orphan Children of deceased Preachers, who may apply for assistance; as well as with a sacred regard to the *confidential* character of any communications, made by them, or on their behalf, in reference to their private affairs and necessities.

(2.) That *two* Treasurers, one Preacher and *one Layman*, and also a Secretary, shall be appointed at each Conference, who shall be *ex officio* members of the Committee.

(3.) The Treasurer for the time being of the *Seniors' Fund*, which is partially assisted by an Annual Grant from the Auxiliary Fund, shall also be *ex officio* a member of the Committee of that Fund; in order that he may give such information as may be deemed necessary or advantageous.

II. EXPULSION OF MEMBERS.

1. During the life of MR. WESLEY, and for a short period afterwards, the Superintendent (formerly called "the Assistant") possessed, according to the primitive Rules and established usage of the Connexion, the entire and unrestricted power of excluding from the Society any members whom, on account of their habitual and persevering violation of the laws of God, or of any of our general Rules, he judged to be improper for our Christian communion. This power was subject only, in the case of an appeal, to the paternal interference of MR. WESLEY, while he lived, and, after his death, to that of the District-Committees and of the Conference. (See the 7th head of the General Rules, dated May 1st, 1743.)

2. It was subsequently agreed, in 1794, (see Minutes, vol. i., p. 299,) to regulate and limit the power of the Superintendent, by a formal engagement then made on the part of the Conference, that the Preachers should "*consult* the Stewards and Leaders," before they proceeded to any act of expulsion; the admission and expulsion of members being, however, at the same time, explicitly recognised as among those "*spiritual* concerns of the Society" which, in contradistinction to "*temporal* concerns," had "*ever*" been, and should continue to be, "*managed by the Preachers.*" This legal provision for "*consultation*" applied to members *generally*. But a distinct and special provision was made, in the same year, in reference to *Trustees*; viz.,—"No Trustee (however accused, or defective in conforming to the established Rules of the Society) shall be removed from the Society, unless his crime or breach of the Rules of the Society be *proved in the presence of the Trustees and Leaders.*"

3. At length, in 1797, (see Minutes, vol. i., p. 375,) instead of this simple "*consultation*" of the Stewards and Leaders, it was enacted, that *no person* should be expelled for immorality, till such immorality had been "*proved at a Leaders' Meeting*;" or, as this clause appears to have been afterwards explained, "*proved to the satisfaction*" of the Leaders'-Meeting. And the intention of this new enactment is officially recorded to have been, to deliver the members of our Societies from every apprehension of *clandestine* expulsions. "That Superintendent," it is stated, "would be bold indeed, who would act with partiality or injustice *in the presence* of the whole Meeting of Leaders. Such a Superintendent, we trust, we have not among us; and if there ever should be, we should be ready to do all possible justice to our injured brethren."

4. The case to which this Rule of 1797 applies, must necessarily be understood as being that of a member who *demand*s a trial at the Leaders'-Meeting. "The far greater number," it is truly stated, "*exclude themselves*, by utterly forsaking us." (See "Form of Discipline," 1797, sect. vi.) Continued absence from the class-meeting, or other means of grace, without any sufficient reason, or some manifest breach of the laws of God, or of the particular Rules of our own Connexion, is usually in such cases reported by the Class-Leader to the Preacher, at the time of the Quarterly Visitation. If there be no denial of the fact, or satisfactory defence against the charge, on the part of the member, or of his friends who may be present, and if the Preacher, in the case of alleged crime or misconduct, be of opinion that the offence is one of such grave and serious character as to require some public testimony of disapprobation, the immediate exclusion of the negligent or offending member has usually resulted, quietly, and as a matter of course, by the Preacher's withholding his Society-ticket, and erasing his name from the Class-book. But if the member, so charged, deny the allegation of a wilful neglect of our peculiar discipline as to class-meetings, &c., or of a breach of some law of Scripture, or rule of Methodism, and demand a trial, for the proof or disproof thereof, before the Leaders'-Meeting, or before a Committee of Leaders appointed by that Meeting, then such trial must, as our law now stands, and has stood ever since 1797, be forthwith conceded. If a majority of the Leaders who vote at the Meeting shall be "*satisfied*" that sufficient proof is adduced, to establish the fact of a wilful and habitual negligence, or of the violation of some Scriptural or Methodistical Rule, and shall give a verdict to that effect, then the Leaders'-Meeting has discharged *its whole part* of the painful duty to be performed, and the case is left in the hands of the Superintendent. On *him* devolves, in his pastoral character, as the person whose peculiar call and province it is to "*watch over that soul*," as one that "*must give an account*," the sole right and duty of deciding on the measures to be adopted towards the offender, in consequence of the verdict thus pronounced. He must consider his solemn responsibility, personally and officially, to God and to the church of Christ, and his special obligation to care most tenderly and anxiously for the spiritual and eternal welfare of the individual whose conduct is implicated; and, impartially applying the laws of God, as found in the Holy Scriptures, or the specific Rules of our body, (as the case may be,) to the facts which have been declared to have been proved, as involving a violation of those laws or Rules, he must prayerfully form the best judgment he can, respecting the nature and degree of the ecclesiastical penalty most fit to be inflicted; whether censure and reproof, in private or in pub-

lic,—temporary suspension from Methodistical privileges,—putting the member back again into a state of mere probation,—or, finally, the extreme penalty of expulsion.

5. This the Conference solemnly declare to be, in their conscientious judgment, the import and intent, even according to the most *large* and *liberal* interpretation which can with truth and fairness be given, of our Rules and usages, collectively considered, and as they now exist, in reference to this part of our pastoral discipline. The power of determining the sentence to be passed on an offender, thus uniformly, and from the beginning, reserved to our Superintendents, the Conference believe to be essential to the Scriptural Duties and Functions of the Pastoral Office. Those duties and functions they can on no account consent to abandon, or permit to be frittered away; for that would seriously endanger the purity and peace of our Connexion, on the one hand, and the rights, liberties, and spiritual privileges of our people, on the other hand. The pastoral duty and power vested in the Christian ministry, to exclude obstinate offenders from our religious fellowship, for manifest violations of the general laws of the Holy Scriptures, or of the particular Rules of our Connexion, are clearly essential to peace and purity. The correlative power of the Pastor, who, if a man of God, “naturally cares” for the flock, to decide, after the case has been proved, on the adoption either of some mild and corrective sentence, or of the severer one of expulsion, according to his own deliberate and conscientious views of the whole affair, and all its circumstances, is equally essential to the *protection* of an accused individual from the effects of personal prejudice or irritation, or of popular excitement and undue local influence.

6. Asserting, however, in the strongest manner, the Scriptural principles now stated, and which have governed our discipline from the beginning, the Conference do nevertheless most cheerfully agree to adopt the following *Additional Guards* and *Securities* to our people, for the *proper exercise* of the powers confided to Superintendents in cases of Expulsion:—

(1.) No sentence of expulsion shall hereafter be pronounced by any Superintendent *in the same Meeting* at which the *trial* shall have taken place.—To afford time for full inquiry into the past character of the party, and other circumstances, and for calm and careful deliberation, the sentence shall be deferred for *at least one week* after the trial; unless the Superintendent be fully satisfied at once, that the case is one in which some of the milder forms of discipline should alone be adopted, and that expulsion is not at all to be contemplated.

(2.) In difficult or doubtful cases, the Superintendent is now further directed, not to proceed to the actual sentence of expulsion without privately asking information from such individual Leaders or other judicious and experienced members of the Society, as are most likely to put him into full possession of all the circumstances necessary to his forming, with due discretion and caution, his own final judgment on the subject.

(3.) Every case of proposed expulsion shall be brought by the Superintendent before the Weekly Meeting of the Preachers of his Circuit, in order that he may have the advantage of hearing the opinions and advice of his colleagues and co-Pastors, before he shall finally decide on the course he ought to adopt.

(4.) In all cases of dissatisfaction with the sentence of expulsion, pronounced by a Superintendent, the aggrieved person shall have, as heretofore, the right of appeal to the Annual Meeting of the Preachers of his District, and even, if still dissatisfied, to the Conference; who will hear him by a Committee, or by a Special Deputation, and endeavour to decide according to truth, and to the requirements of Holy Scripture, and of our discipline.

(5.) But as it is readily admitted that the appeal to the full District-Committee, or to the Conference, may possibly be found, practically, too inconvenient to admit of a sufficiently prompt and easy application, except in cases of extraordinary interest and importance; the Conference now agrees and resolves,—That the *principle* of the Rule of 1793, (see “Minutes,” vol. i., p. 277,) respecting the appointment of *Minor* District-Committees in the case of Preachers, shall be extended also to the case of all excluded members, who choose to avail themselves of its provisions. An excluded person shall, therefore, have the right of selecting *any two* Preachers of the District to which his Circuit belongs, and the Superintendent shall select *two*

other such Preachers; and these four, with the Chairman of the District, (or if it happen that the Chairman is himself the Superintendent whose act is impugned, then some other Preacher to be chosen by the four other members as their Chairman *pro tempore*,) shall meet in some convenient place, and shall have the power of modifying, reversing, or confirming the sentence against which such appeal shall be made. Their decision shall in such case be binding on all parties, unless subsequently altered, on further appeal, by the full District-Committee, or by the Conference.

(6.) These additional guards and securities for our people against the possibility of rash and unwarrantable expulsions, by granting an appeal from the decision of an individual Superintendent to the collective judgment and wisdom of *a number of Pastors*, being cheerfully adopted, the Conference considers it both necessary and reasonable, at the same time, to provide an equally easy, prompt, and convenient remedy for *another case*, which may possibly arise, in seasons of peculiar excitement, though it is confidently hoped that it will be found to be one of only rare occurrence. The case intended, is that of the majority of a Leaders'-Meeting, before whom a member accused may be put on his trial, being induced, through some undue local interest, or influence, or prejudice, so far to forget its duty to God, and to the purity, peace, and good order of our Connexion, as to bring in, factiously and perversely, a verdict notoriously inconsistent with *the facts proved*, and with the plain and obvious meaning, and the general or specific regulations, of *the laws of God, or of our own body*, as applicable to these facts,—or as even, in certain conceivable cases, to refuse to give any verdict at all;—thus, in either case, defeating the ends of public justice, and preventing, by an abuse of their constitutional functions, the exercise of that discipline which Christ has commanded, and for which He has made the Ministers of his church responsible to Himself. It is true, that our present Rules provide an ultimate remedy for such an occasional and extraordinary occurrence, by the powers given to Regular and Special District-Committees, in 1791, 1792, and subsequent years, and confirmed and extended in 1797. But that remedy, though sufficient, when actually called into operation, to provide for “any critical case,” and to “redress any grievance,” is not of easy and convenient application. There is the same reason for affording *facilities* of redress to a Superintendent, obstructed in his pastoral duties by the prevalence of a contumacious and factious spirit, as for granting those facilities to an aggrieved member, complaining of the prejudice or severity of his Superintendent. The Conference therefore resolves, That a Superintendent, complaining of any Leaders'-Meeting, for refusing to act its constitutional part, or for acting it factiously or in contradiction to law and evidence, in the trial of an accused member, shall have the same right of prompt appeal to the revision of a *Minor* District-Committee, as has just been granted to an excluded member in the other case supposed.

7. In almost every case, it is presumed that this Minor District-Committee will be sufficient to accomplish the purposes of general peace and purity, and at least “settle everything till the Conference.” But if not, there is still in reserve, where it may be found absolutely necessary, the power of calling a *Special* District-Meeting, consisting of the whole number of the Christian Pastors of that District, who shall be in full connexion with the Conference, according to our existing Rules respecting District-Committees; whose powers, either in the cases here particularly intended, or in any other cases, nothing contained in this document shall be construed to weaken or abridge. In reference to the constitution of *Special District-Meetings*, on whatever subject such Meetings may hereafter be deemed necessary, and in order to render their decisions satisfactory to our people, the Conference resolves, That instead of “*three* of the nearest Superintendents,” chosen by the Superintendent who calls the Meeting, *four* Superintendents, or *other* Preachers, may be called in, if either party desire such assistance, and be incorporated with the Preachers stationed in the District. Of these, *two shall be chosen by each of the two parties* concerned in the affairs to be settled by the Meeting. The parties may severally make choice of Preachers in whom they have most confidence, from *any* District, *without restriction as to contiguity*; and the President of the Conference, if he judge it expedient, may attend and preside in all such assemblies, according to the Regulations of 1797. The right of appeal to the Conference from

the decisions of this, as of all other inferior jurisdictions, is to be considered as reserved to all parties.

8. In the preceding articles of this Document, reference has been repeatedly made to the *Law of God contained in the Holy Scriptures*, as furnishing, in the trial of members, that *primary* standard of judgment, by which the innocence or culpability of any particular facts adduced in evidence is ever to be determined. This principle, though obvious, and scarcely needing argumentative defence, the Conference have advisedly made prominent in this statement of their views. Any conduct in a man professing godliness, which can be shown to be decidedly condemned by the precepts and principles of the New Testament, is surely sufficient to justify, if persisted in, the application of a suitable ecclesiastical censure, or other penalty, to such an individual; even though it may not have been previously found necessary to make a distinct and specific Rule of our own Society on that exact mode and form of delinquency. The New-Testament *Law of Purity*, in reference both to the Pastors and Members of the Christian Church, and with respect both to Doctrine and Practice,—its often-repeated *Law of Peace*, and *Godly Quietness*,—and its *Laws of Courtesy, Brotherly Kindness*, and mutual *Charity*—as well as its direction that “all things” should “be done decently and in order,” and its requirement of reasonable submission, on the part of Church Members, to the scriptural “rule” of those who are “over them in the Lord,”—these are *standing enactments* of the Gospel, binding on all Christian communities, and therefore binding on the Methodist Societies, without exception. Any obstinate violation of them must be suitably visited, when proved; or else the authority of Jesus Christ himself, as the Lord and Master of our department of his spiritual House, will be criminally set at nought; and He will have just cause to say to the Ministers and Pastors of our community, as He did to one of old time, “I have somewhat against thee.”

9. On considering, in connexion with these Scriptural principles, the present state of several Circuits, and the system of organized agitation and disturbance in which certain persons have publicly threatened to proceed, in the course of the coming year, the Conference deem it necessary to take this opportunity of explicitly declaring their views on that subject, and of giving such general directions to the Superintendents as the exigency appears to demand.

The self-called “Grand Central Association,” considered as to its character of *confederacy* and *combination*, and its extensive schemes of disorder and mischief, is, in those respects, somewhat unusual and strange; and some other persons, also, avoiding a *formal* connexion with the Association, have applied themselves with unwonted activity and insidious concert to plans and efforts of factious agitation. Hence, some of the friends of good order have supposed that *new* Rules were wanting to check these new forms of evil, and have called on the Conference to protect, by some additional enactments, the peaceable and well-disposed members of our numerous Societies from the menaced annoyance and insult. It should, however, be considered that the circumstances which are most characteristic and essential in the constitution and conduct of the “Association,” and in the proceedings of other agents of faction, are plainly contrary even to our *existing Rules and Usages*, and to those *principles*, conservative of purity and peace, which the Conference has ever recognised, and guarded by strong enactments. Thus, in 1795, it was resolved, that any Local Preacher, Trustee, Steward, or Leader, who should disturb the peace of the Connexion by speaking for or against “the old or new plan,” then the subject of eager contention, should be expelled from the Society. And in 1796 it was enjoined, that “no man or number of men in our Connexion should, on any account or occasion, be allowed to circulate letters, or call meetings,” for the purpose of stirring up our people to divisive and innovating agitations. Such plans and proceedings, moreover, are plainly opposed to the supreme and unrepealable *Law of Christ* in the New Testament, already repeatedly referred to in this Address. “Debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults,” are there deprecated and condemned in the strongest and most affecting terms. We are enjoined to mark them that *cause divisions*,—if any man that is called a brother be a *railer*, with such an one, no not to eat,—to live in peace, that the God of love and peace may be with us,—to let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from us,—to follow peace with all

men,—if it be possible, as much as in us lieth, to live peaceably with all men,—to know them which labour among us, and are over us in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, and be at peace among ourselves,—to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,—and, finally, to desire that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. St. James declares that “where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work; but the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy; and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.” The Conference, for these reasons, deem it unnecessary at present to provide against these modern forms of offence by any new and more specific regulation; because so much of *moral evil* and *un-Christian practice* is involved in the plans and proceedings of the said Association,—and of other similar confederacies, by whatever name disguised,—that to give them countenance, or to co-operate with them, is to be a partaker and abettor of various palpable transgressions of the commandments of God, and a violator, in some instances of the letter, and in others of the whole spirit and tenor, of our established rules. It is therefore hereby declared to be the unanimous judgment of the Conference, That any person who, instead of *peaceably retiring* from our Connexion, if he decidedly disapprove of our system either of doctrine or discipline, and cannot conscientiously even *acquiesce* in them, endeavours to retain and to employ his position among us for the purposes of opposition and strife,—or who continues, after due admonition, to be a member of “The Grand Central Association,” or of any other confederacy formed for the object of systematic agitation,—is guilty of a flagrant transgression of that *morality of the New Testament*, the observance of which was a principal condition of his admission into our Society, and must be considered to have justly forfeited his claim to the privileges of our religious fellowship. In applying to particular cases this righteous general rule, the Conference exhorts all the Superintendents to exercise, in connexion with a holy firmness, the moderation and mercy of the Gospel; bearing long, and dealing tenderly, though faithfully, with the weak, the ill-informed, and the misled; while they do not shrink from the effectual execution of necessary Christian discipline on those who by overt acts of hostility and disturbance identify themselves as the leaders, or open partisans, of disaffection and faction. The sound and satisfied majority of our Societies—a majority happily so immense as to render all comparative calculations unnecessary—have a just claim on us for protection in the quiet enjoyment of their religious privileges; a claim which some of them have most forcibly urged, and which it is our bounden duty to meet with a discreet but decisive enforcement of our discipline on those whom milder methods shall fail to reclaim from their course of disturbance and mischief.

III. MEETINGS FOR COMMUNICATION WITH THE CONFERENCE BY MEMORIAL, ON SUBJECTS OF LOCAL CONCERN, OR ON THE GENERAL LAWS OF THE CONNEXION.

The spirit and substance of our *present* regulations and authorized usages on this subject the Conference considers to be embodied in the following summary statement:—

1. The Conference have said that they, as well as the District-Committees, will gladly receive useful intelligence and information, even from any individual member of the Society, “on whatever concerns themselves or their people.” (See “Minutes” of 1796.)

2. “The *Leaders’-Meeting* is the proper Meeting for the Society, and the *Quarterly-Meeting* for the Circuit.” (“Minutes” of 1797.) From those Meetings, therefore, the Conference will receive communications, whenever they deem it *necessary* to make them, on subjects connected with *the proper business of their own Societies*, or of *their own Circuits*, respectively.

3. After full discussion and deliberation, it was judged (in 1797) that “*other formal meetings*, in general, would be contrary to the Methodist economy, and very prejudicial in their consequences.” The grounds of this judgment were, doubtless, such as these:—The “*other formal meetings*,” to which reference is made, are obviously *unnecessary* for the purposes of *individual* representations of fact, or for

communication with the Conference on the really difficult and important affairs of a particular Society or Circuit; the fullest provision being made for all these cases by the preceding articles of the same Rule. If *unnecessary*, they are for *that* reason *undesirable*; because *occasions* of contention and debate ought not to be needlessly multiplied, especially in a *religious* Society, which is bound by the law of Christ to "follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." Christians should rather sacrifice unessential points of opinion, or matters of personal predilection, than endanger, by an eager obtrusion of their own views, the maintenance of tranquillity and good feeling in the communities to which they belong.—If the object of those who wish for the "other formal meetings," to which the Minute of 1797 objects, be the suggestion of any improvements in our various Public Institutions, then, too, are they, generally speaking, as unnecessary, as in the case of Society or Circuit business; for in all those institutions Committees are now appointed, in which Preachers and laymen of unimpeachable integrity and intelligence have a place, which Committees have, as such, regular official communication with the Conference, on every subject connected with their respective trusts and interests.—"Other formal meetings" cannot be needed in order to obtain redress for the alleged misconduct or mal-administration of any particular Preacher or Preachers; because the most ample means of obtaining such redress are already secured to complaining parties *connected with the Circuit immediately concerned*, by our existing Rules respecting the Trial of Accused Preachers.—It seems, then, that no very material and legitimate business remains for the "other formal meetings" in question, except it be the transmission to the Conference of opinions, respecting some desired change in the *general laws of the Connexion*. Now, it should be considered that frequent alterations in the laws of a religious community, when they have once been deliberately settled, are neither safe nor advantageous. Such questions should not be hastily or capriciously mooted, as they usually tend to "gender strifes," rather than to "godly edifying." A habit of petty, meddling, speculative legislation would be a dire calamity. It is not good in matters of discipline, any more than of doctrine, to be "ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth;"—ever making new laws, or trying to mend existing ones, instead of keeping those already in force, and endeavouring to turn them to the best account for the spiritual benefit of ourselves and others.

4. For reasons probably similar to those now stated, the Conference of 1797 did not feel themselves at liberty to establish or encourage "other formal meetings." They did not, however, wholly prohibit them, as matters of occasional occurrence; being willing, it appears, to provide, if possible, for the permanent tranquillity of the Connexion in circumstances extraordinary as well as ordinary. They therefore appended to the statement last quoted the following Rule:—

"In order to be as tender as possible, consistently with what we believe to be essential to the welfare of our Societies, *we allow that other formal meetings may be held*, if they first receive the approbation of the Superintendent, and the Leaders' or Quarterly Meetings:—provided also, that the Superintendent, if he please, be present at every such meeting."

The present Conference have considered with the most respectful attention the wish which appears to have been of late revived among several of our sincere friends, that some direct and authorized medium of occasional communication with the Conference should now be provided for our people, in reference to a certain class of subjects, which do indeed concern *the general laws*, and, consequently, the practical administration, of Methodism; but which, because they do not affect them in their individual capacity as members, nor yet relate, strictly or directly, to the local affairs of their particular Society or Circuit, cannot, for that reason, be made the topics of discussion, or of memorial, in the Leaders' or Quarterly Meetings, without violating a great and important general maxim, essential to a due observance of the Christian *law of peace*, and to the orderly transaction of our public business; namely, that every meeting among us shall confine itself to its proper and definite province, do *its own work* in the spirit of piety and kindness, and refrain from interfering with the work of others. Anxious to maintain this maxim in its full authority, and concurring *generally* in all the reasons stated in the pre-

ceding article, as rendering "other formal meetings" undesirable and unnecessary, (except, perhaps, on *very special* occasions,) this Conference are nevertheless solicitous, like their venerable predecessors of 1797, to meet, as far as the public peace and safety will permit, the *wish* above described. On careful deliberation, the Conference are of opinion, that the *principle* of the concluding portion of the law of 1797, already quoted, will be found to furnish the best and most expedient means of accomplishing all that can be reasonably desired. But it must be confessed, that the *details* of the Rule, as it now stands, appear to be so vague, and otherwise defective, as to require considerable alteration and extension. The Conference, therefore, now agrees as follows; viz.,—

(1.) That, *after the final close* of the June Quarterly-Meeting in every year, the Superintendent shall detain the Circuit-Stewards, and all the Society-Stewards, who may be present, whether belonging to the Societies in the Circuit-town, or to those in the country places; and shall ascertain from them whether there really exists, *in that Circuit*, a general or considerable dissatisfaction with any of our existing Rules, or a prevalent and earnest desire for the enactment of any new and additional Regulations. If it be the opinion of a majority of the persons so consulted, or even of any considerable proportion of them, that the wish for alteration is strong and extensive, and moreover, that the matter is clearly of such importance as to justify the calling of a *Special Circuit-Meeting*, in order to consider the propriety of sending a Memorial to the Conference on the subject, then, and in every such case, the Superintendent is hereby *directed and required* to summon, by good and sufficient notices to all the parties concerned, such Special Circuit-Meeting, which shall assemble within a period of not less than seven days, and not exceeding ten days, from the time of the June Quarterly-Meeting. The power of a *veto*, in reference to the calling of such Meetings, given to the Superintendents by the old Rule of 1797, is hereby *wholly repealed and abolished*; and the provision above stated is substituted for it.

(2.) That, whereas the Rule of 1797 did not at all *define* the composition of the "other formal meetings" partially allowed by it, it is now expedient to define the constitution of the Special Circuit-Meeting above mentioned, if one shall be convened, in the following manner; viz., such Meeting shall include,—

All the Travelling Preachers of the Circuit, comprehending the Supernumerary Preachers, if any:—

The Circuit-Stewards:—

The Stewards of the Town Society, or of all the Societies (if there be more than one) in the Circuit-Town:—

One of the Stewards of each of those other Societies which were entered on the latest Circuit-Schedule as containing fifty members or upwards:—

The Male Class-Leaders in the Circuit, of *ten years' continuous and uninterrupted standing* in that office:—

The Local Preachers in the Circuit, of *the same continuous and uninterrupted standing*, since they were first placed on the Plan as Local Preachers *fully admitted*:—

The Trustees of the Chapel or Chapels of the Circuit-Town, (if regularly settled, and so secured to the use of the Connexion,) *being members* of the Society:—

And, One of the Trustee-Treasurers or Trustee-Stewards of every other regularly settled and secured Chapel in the Circuit, *being a member* of the Society.

The Superintendent, or, in the case of his unavoidable absence, some other Travelling Preacher appointed by him, shall always preside in the Meeting.

(3.) That at such Meeting, any member thereof may propose for consideration, as before stated, the propriety of memorializing the Conference, respecting the repeal or alteration of any of our existing laws, or of the enactment of any additional Rule. Such Memorial, if approved by a majority of the persons present, shall be signed *forthwith* by the individuals who concur in its adoption, and then immediately placed in the hands of the Superintendent, who is made responsible for its delivery, personally or otherwise, to the President of the Conference, on or before the second day of its ensuing session. And all such Memorials shall be received by the Conference, and referred to a Committee of its members, who shall carefully

examine, consider, and classify the whole, and report their opinion thereupon to the Conference.

(4.) That the right of memorial on the subject of our general legislation, thus recognised and allowed, shall, however, be exercised under the following Regulations, which the Conference considers to be both sound and reasonable in principle, and really necessary in order to the prevention of great and serious evils:—First: *Notice* in writing shall be given to the Superintendent, for the information of all who desire it, at least three days before the day of Meeting, of the precise subject on which it is intended to propose that any Memorial shall be sent to the Conference; and no proposal, of which such timely notice has not been given, shall be allowed to be brought forward for that year.—Secondly: All Memorials, requesting any change in our laws, shall be limited to such changes only as are consistent with the *essential principles* of Wesleyan Methodism, and within the pale of our *established constitution*. The Conference cannot fairly be required to receive any propositions of a manifestly revolutionary character, or which are wholly subversive of that system of doctrine or discipline which has been confided to them by Mr. Wesley as a sacred deposit, and which, as they believe, has been also committed to their keeping by the providence and grace of God.—Thirdly: The Rules, whose alteration, repeal, or enactment may become the subject of discussion and memorial in such Meetings, must be such Rules only as have operated, or are intended to operate, *in the government of the Societies at large*. This is in literal accordance with the limitation adopted in 1797, in the analogous case of the “new laws,” to be submitted to the consideration of the September Quarterly-Meetings. The disciplinary jurisdiction of the Preachers over each other, and their right of regulating among themselves all that relates peculiarly and specifically to the Christian ministry, and the pastoral office, are not to be considered as subjects open to the official interference by Memorial of the Meetings now constituted.—Fourthly: The Special Meeting of one Circuit shall not be at liberty to intermeddle with the local affairs or proceedings of any other Circuit or Circuits; respecting which, its information must often, of necessity, be exceedingly partial and defective, and its interference, consequently, if attempted, must be as useless and even mischievous, as it would be culpably officious, offensive, and unconstitutional. (See “Minutes” of 1828, vol. vi., pp. 399—401.) With these necessary limitations, the Superintendents are directed to allow, in Meetings constituted as aforesaid, the free and friendly discussions of our people, and to take charge of any Memorial from them, couched in proper and respectful terms. (See Minutes of Conference for the year 1835, vol. vii., p. 573.)

[THE Resolution of the Conference, *declaratory* of the right of the Conference and the District-Committees to institute a friendly inquiry into the ministerial conduct of any of its members, is contained in the following extract from the Minutes of the same year. (1835.) That the right concerning which the Declaration was made, has always been exercised in Methodism, is fully established in the able pamphlet of the Rev. Thomas Jackson, President of the Conference for the present year.]

Q. XXIII. Is it expedient, on account of recent occurrences, to re-assert, by DECLARATORY RESOLUTIONS, any of our Rules or usages, which individuals have attempted to contradict or pervert?

A. We think it is expedient; and therefore the Conference *unanimously* DECLARES as follows; viz.,—

1. That not only the Conference, but all its District-Committees, whether ordinary or special, possess the undoubted right of instituting, in their official and collective character, any inquiry or investigation, which they may deem expedient, into the moral, Christian, or ministerial conduct of the Preachers under their care, even although no formal or regular accusation may have been previously announced on the part of any individual; and that they have also the authority of coming to such decisions thereupon, as to them may seem most conformable to the laws of the New Testament, and to the Rules and usages of our Connexion. In the District-Meetings, especially, the Chairman has the official right of originating such

inquiries, if he think necessary; because our Rule declares, that "the Chairman of each District, in conjunction with his brethren of the Committee, shall be *responsible* to the Conference for the execution of the laws, as far as his District is concerned."

2. That all Preachers who desire to remain in ministerial communion with us, are considered as retaining that communion on the distinct condition, that they hold themselves individually pledged to submit, in a peaceable and Christian spirit, to the usual disciplinary investigations, not only of the Conference, but of all its District-Committees, whether ordinary or special, when summoned according to our Rules and usages; and that any Preacher who refuses to submit to the friendly examination of the Chairman and of other brethren, or to take his trial, regularly and formally, before the Preachers either of an ordinary or of a Special District-Committee, when duly required so to do, shall be considered as, *ipso facto*, incurring the penalty of suspension until the ensuing Conference; because no possible security can be found even against the worst forms of moral or ministerial delinquency, if persons charged with any misconduct, and summoned to trial, be allowed to evade with impunity our established modes of investigation.

3. That a Preacher under suspension has no right to vote on any question in the Conference, while his suspension is continued; nor even to be present in its meetings, without leave, until his own case shall be brought forward. (Vol. vii., p. 549.)

THE END.

Beecham, John,

An essay on the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism

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